

SECRET SERVICE

OLD AND YOUNG KING BRADY, DETECTIVES.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post-Office, March 1, 1899, by Frank Tousey.

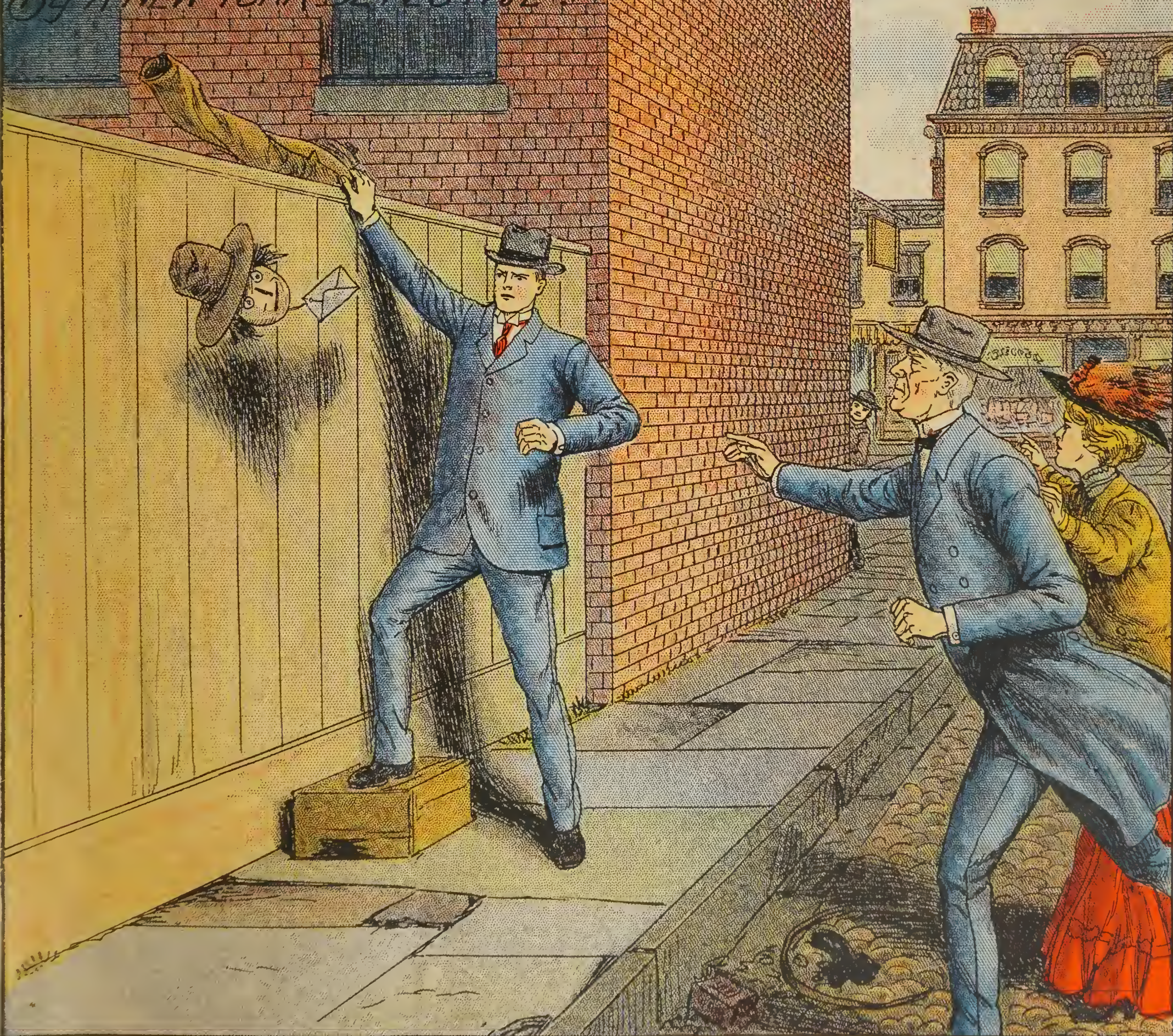
No. 529.

NEW YORK, MARCH 12, 1909.

Price 5 Cents.

THE BRADYS AND THE BOY SHADOWER; OR, A VERY HARD CASE TO SOLVE.

By A NEW-YORK DETECTIVE.



"Why, look!" cried Old King Brady. "That's a dummy!" "You are right," answered Harry as he laid his hand upon the coat. "A wooden head! What can it mean?" "There is the boy!" Alice exclaimed, pointing to the end of the wall.

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CHAPTER I.

THE MODEL MAKER AND THE TWO WILLS.

If ever there was a happy boy in the City of Chicago that boy was Will Wilson, aged 14.

And Will Wilson, of Chicago, was a happy boy, simply because it was born in him to be happy.

Another in his situation would have been in the doleful dumps all day long.

We must stop to explain why, for it is very necessary that this story should begin right if it is going to be understood.

Will Wilson's father was James Wilson, a maker of models for tailors, milliners, cigar dealers and the like.

He was an expert woodcarver and really an artist in his way.

For a number of years he had a little shop down at the end of an alley off Halstead street, beyond Jackson.

The shop was upstairs over a stable and there was another story above it, where Will Wilson and his father lived.

The few persons who knew them—and they were very few—thought that old Mr. Wilson must have married very late in life to have a boy so young, for the old model maker could not have been less than seventy, while Will, as we have said, was aged 14.

As for Mrs. Wilson, nobody had ever seen her around the alley. Will knew nothing about her and there was no other little Wilsons.

When Will, in his childish way, used to ask about his mother, the old model maker would only say:

"Oh, she's dead and gone long ago!"

Will had stopped inquiring about her long before he came to be aged 14.

Will went to school like other boys and enjoyed his play like other boys.

He was not a bit lonely living alone with the old model maker, who worked from early morning until late at night doing his own housework as well as his model making, in which latter he sometimes allowed Will to help.

But this was not very often.

The old man seemed to prefer to do everything himself.

He treated his son with singular deference and consideration, and as for kindness, that was unlimited.

He dressed the boy in the best money could buy, although he never dressed up himself, except on a Sunday, when he always took Will to church.

The boy had only to express a wish when it was instantly granted if possible, and yet the old Englishman—such was James Wilson's nationality—took good care not to spoil his son, and so well did he succeed that Will grew up an exceedingly well-behaved boy.

One more peculiarity of the old model maker's must be mentioned before we get down to our story, and that was that he never would set down at table with his son.

This troubled Will and he often urged his father to do so.

But no!

The old man always had some excuse.

He used to set Will's place with the finest china and there were some elegant old pieces of silver plate which he brought out on Sundays and holidays for the table.

And there Will would sit up in solemn state and eat his meals while the old man waited on him like a servant.

After the meal was over the model maker would sit down at the kitchen table where never a cloth was spread and eat.

And this, as we have said, troubled Will not a little.

Another boy would have grown sulky over it perhaps and imagined that his father did not consider him good enough to eat with.

But Will was not built on those lines, and at last he grew to take this sort of thing as a matter of course.

Such was Will Wilson's situation on the day he turned fourteen.

It was in the month of February a few years ago and about a week later there suddenly came a change.

It was on a Saturday and Will was home from school when there came a letter over which Mr. Wilson grew very much excited.

The letter was from England. It had an English postage stamp on it. Will collected postage stamps and that was how he knew.

His father started in with a sudden exclamation. Then he laughed; next he swore, at nobody in particular it seemed, but as Will had never heard him swear before he was greatly surprised.

Then he paced the floor for a long while, always refusing to give Will any explanation of his singular conduct.

At last he quieted down and, bidding Will to remain indoors under peril of his utmost displeasure, the model maker clapped on his hat and went out.

He was gone for hours.

It was the first day he had missed working within Will's recollection.

When at last he returned he informed Will that he had decided to move and that he proposed to move that night.

They went to work and packed all the afternoon and all the evening.

Somewhere between midnight and morning a truck came and took the things away.

So quietly and so secretly was it done that not one of the neighbors "caught on."

It was two days before even the stableman knew it.

Then the old model maker and his young son mysteriously disappeared and as they were but little known even among their own neighbors, few gave the matter serious thought.

Before the week was out people had stopped talking about it. Before the month was out the Wilsons were forgotten.

But Mr. Wilson and his son had not gone far away.

Out in the Blue Island section of Chicago the model maker had settled down and was still continuing business.

Of course those for whom he worked knew that he was still in the city, but he would give no address and he put out no sign.

On certain days he visited his regular customers, took orders and personally saw to the delivery of the goods.

If the old man had been secretive before he was doubly so now.

Here he had his boy with him, a shrewd, bright-eyed little fellow, as keen as a needle and thoroughly versed in city ways.

But we may as well mention right here that if any of the model maker's old neighbors had looked in on him they would at once have made the discovery that this boy was not Will Wilson, although the old man called him by that name and spoke of him to his new neighbors as his son.

The old Englishman was now out more than he used to be and the boy stayed home and worked sometimes on the models and all the time at housework, doing the most of it.

Now James Wilson sat at meals with his son and he also kept him out of school.

As the boy was rather large for his age this did not attract attention.

The case was a peculiar one. We have stated it thus plainly in order that what follows may be better understood.

A year passed and March came again.

Trouble had hit the model maker. He had been very sick all winter and the opening of spring found him confined to his bed.

But although he could not work there seemed to be no lack of money. He knew Will was industrious and obedient, but the situation seemed to wear on him, for he was not of the happy disposition that the old Will had been.

There had been a good many letters coming and going during the first week in March that year and at last one day there came one which seemed to excite the old model maker greatly.

He got up out of his bed and, although ill able to do so, dressed and went away.

He was gone two hours and when he returned he was almost dead.

"Now then, Will," he said, flinging himself into a chair, "I've got to have your help. You remember what I told you when I first brought you to live with me?"

"I do, father," replied the boy. "I am not likely to forget."

"Very well. Now of course you do not understand this situation, but you will be made to at the proper time. You know this neighborhood pretty well, of course?"

"Certainly. I have always lived out here."

"Exactly. You know that brick house next to the vacant lot on the corner of Bellis street and Blue Island avenue?"

"Two blocks up, yes. What about that?"

"Listen. This afternoon at three o'clock the Pennsylvania Limited from New York is due at the station on Canal street. You know the place?"

"Certainly, father. Of course I do."

"Very well, Will. Then you do as I tell you and as I told you when I brought you away from your aunt's. I'll make a rich man of you—see?"

"Go on. Go on, dad."

"Don't press me, boy. I'm almost dead. Can't you see? If I can only live to see this thing through."

"You were speaking about the Pennsylvania Limited, dad. Do go ahead."

"Will, on that train will come three persons whom you are to shadow. You ought to know how. You were used by the Pinkerton Detective Agency for nearly a year."

"Yes, yes, I know, dad. We both know that many a time I have wished I was back at my old job again. It is most wretchedly dull living here."

"Which is all you care for your old dad, you ungrateful son."

"Bite it off!" snapped the boy. "Get down to tacks!" Here was strange talk.

The vanished Will would never have spoken that way.

But the model maker really was too weak to get into a dispute with his son.

In fact his weakness was increasing to such an alarming extent that he was beginning to have doubts about his ability to keep off the bed long enough to complete his plans.

He arose, staggered to a closet and helped himself to a big drink of whisky, although liquor was something he seldom indulged in.

And the boy shadower of the Pinkerton Detective Agency waited with manifest impatience for what was coming next.

The old man got back into his chair, seemingly revived.

"Now to finish up," he said. "While you were at Pinkerton's you of course heard tell of the Brady Detective Bureau, of New York."

"Sure thing, dad. I've seen Old King Brady in our office many a time."

"And Young King Brady?"

"Sure, and the lady partner, Alice Montgomery, too."

"It don't matter about her. I never knew they had a female partner. Now on that train will come the two Bradys, Will. You want to watch for them and you want to shadow them. Of course it is not necessary for me to tell you that you will run a good chance of spoiling everything if you allow yourself to be seen."

"Oh, I'm hep to that all right. I know my biz and I'm glad enough to get back to it, too. What's the rest?"

"I expect them to go to that vacant lot on the corner of Bellis street. There they ought to receive a letter in a peculiar way which I am not going to explain. If they don't, you ring off and come directly home, for I shall have failed in my purpose for the present at least. If they do, why you stick to that shadowing night and day."

Of course when you see them go to their hotel and tie up for the night you need not stand around the door till morning. That will be the time for you to come home and tell me what is going on."

"All right, dad. I'm onto your curves, but who will look out for you?"

"Your aunt is coming to stay here a few days. Now listen. If you ever expect to be the rich man I have always promised you should be some day, you will be most faithful in this business. Should I die while you are away, why then—but no! I have kept my secret all these years and I will keep it still. I shall not die. Something tells me that I shall live to complete my work. Now I am going back to bed. Hurry up with that job I gave you this morning. I'd like to have it finished before you go."

The job was the turning out of certain wooden blocks which formed the basis of carved heads which the model maker expected to finish up later.

It was a singular fact that the new Will Wilson was quite an expert at this lathe work, while the old Will, who lived over the stable, was never allowed to raise a finger to anything in the mechanical line.

At the proper time Will left for the Fort Wayne station to meet the Pennsylvania Limited.

Meanwhile his aunt had arrived, and although Mr. Wilson appeared to be very much prostrated by his exertions, Will left him without fear, for he had seen him quite as bad before and felt no doubt that he would revive.

At the station the train was as usual late in pulling in. But at last it came and Will had the satisfaction of seeing three persons ascend the steps to Canal street, whom he at once identified as the three partners in the Brady Detective Bureau of New York.

Old King Brady was in his usual quaint attire in which he always appears when not in disguise.

The blue coat with brass buttons was in evidence, also the old-fashioned stock and stand-up collar and the big white hat with its broad brim.

Young King Brady was up to date in his personal appearance as always, and the boy shadower voted Alice Montgomery more beautiful even than when he had seen her at the office of the Pinkerton Detective Agency.

And the detectives walked off down Canal street, little dreaming that they had a boy shadower in their wake.

CHAPTER II.

THE MYSTERY OF THE WOODEN HEAD.

The Bradys were bound for the Sherman House on the corner of Clark and Randolph streets, at which ancient hostelry they usually tie up when in Chicago.

Upon arriving there Old King Brady first inquired for mail matter, but there was none.

He then asked if rooms had been reserved for them in response to his telegram and was informed that such was the case.

"Do you know," remarked Alice Montgomery, as they

were going up in the elevator, "that I think we are being shadowed by a boy."

"No," replied Old King Brady. "Do you think so? I must confess that I have not been particularly on the alert since I left the station."

"What makes you think so, Alice?" demanded Young King Brady. "I noticed that you looked around several times."

"I caught his eye when we first came up the steps on to Canal street," said Alice. "He was then standing near one of the cabs. He was an odd-looking boy and there was something about his face which was decidedly familiar, but still I can't place him. His face rested in my mind and when I first looked back it was to see it again, I supposing that he was still standing there by the cab, but instead of that he was trailing after us. That made me look back several times again and each time I saw him. He was right behind us when we entered the hotel."

"Pity you did not say something about it," remarked Harry.

"Well, do you know it did not occur to me that he might be shadowing us until just as I spoke when it suddenly entered my head. As we do not even know why we are here ourselves it did not enter my mind that anybody else could know that we were coming until just now."

"I wish I had noticed the boy. I would go back and see if he was laying for us to come out," said Harry.

"I'll go," said Alice.

"I wish you would," added Old King Brady. "I have a particular reason for wanting to know."

This conversation was held in the corner of the elevator in the lowest possible tones.

The Bradys left the elevator on the sixth floor.

Alice went back to the street.

When a few minutes later she entered the old detective's room she informed her partners that she could see nothing of the boy.

"Probably it amounts to nothing," said Old King Brady, "and now I want to say that we have got to make a hurried trip out on Blue Island avenue."

"What? I thought you had no idea what the case was to be?" Harry exclaimed.

"Nor have I," replied the old detective. "As you both know, we came here by order of the Secret Service Bureau without other instructions than that we were to act in conjunction with another detective who would wait upon us this evening at the Sherman House with proper credentials. So far, so good. But now listen. Over three weeks ago I received the letter I am now about to show you. Of course I might have shown it to you before, but I didn't. Why, I can't say. The notion came to me to keep it to myself."

"One of those notions you often have," said Harry. "But let us see it now."

"Here is the letter. You may as well read it aloud."

And Harry read as follows:

"Chicago, Jan. 16, 19—.

"Old King Brady:

"Sir—Soon, I don't know how soon, you will be offered an English case which will have to be worked out in

America. The beginning may be in New York, or it may be in Chicago. If you take that case I can be of the greatest assistance to you. I will do so without charge. You will hear from me again and you will do well to act upon my instructions. Perhaps then we may meet. Meanwhile I sign myself, MR. NO NAME."

"Well!" exclaimed Harry. "That's a queer letter. Did you hear from the fellow again?"

"Yes, by telegraph, just before we left New York. Here is the dispatch. Read."

Old King Brady handed out one of the red telegraph blanks used for night messages, upon which was written, following the address:

"When you reach Chicago on the Limited come to the corner of Blue Island avenue and Bellis street. Get there just at dusk. The corner is the one where the vacant lot is. Here you will see a man. He will put his head through a hole in the fence of the yard behind the brick house. He will give you a letter. To avoid mistake the man will lay his coat on top of the fence. This is the test. Take the letter and act upon its instructions, which will be of the greatest service to you in the case.

"It will be of no use to speak to the man. He cannot answer you. Still you can question him if you choose.

"YOUR CHICAGO CORRESPONDENT."

"Bless me!" cried Alice. "Whoever sent that telegram must have had money to burn. It could easily have been cut down one-half."

"I don't interpret it that way," said Old King Brady.

"How then?" demanded Alice.

"That the telegram was sent by some person who knows nothing about business."

"That's it," said Harry. "It was either sent by a woman or by some illiterate man. But how about this English case?"

"We have had no English call, as you know."

"But our present call may prove to be an English one," said Alice.

"Exactly," replied the old detective. "Consequently I am going out there to see how the land lies."

"All hands go?"

"Yes. I can run no risks on anonymous communications."

"We better be starting if we expect to get there at dusk, hadn't we?" said Alice. "The days are shorter here than in New York."

"I propose to go now," replied Old King Brady, and within a few minutes the detectives made a start.

Of course they looked for the boy when they got on the street.

Nothing was seen of him, nor did they see him on the way out to Blue Island avenue.

But all the same Will was on the job.

Just how he managed it we cannot say, because we do not know, but certain it is that he was on hand at the corner of Blue Island avenue and Bellis street a few minutes after the detectives arrived.

And so well had their arrival been timed that they hit the locality just at dusk.

They readily identified the brick house, and as they turned into the lot they saw a man vanish around the end of the fence which cut off the yard.

At about the middle of the fence, sure enough, they could see a man's head projecting.

The head was covered with a round felt hat, resembling no style worn in forty years.

Upon the top of the fence lay a coat.

"Well, well!" exclaimed Old King Brady. "We seem to have discovered what we came out here to see, but the whole affair is at once so singular and so childish that I fail to form the slightest idea of what it can mean."

"What do you mean?" demanded Alice, as they advanced into the lot.

Harry ran ahead and was reaching for the coat.

"Why look!" cried Old King Brady. "That's a dummy!"

"You are right," answered Harry, as he laid his hand upon the coat. "A wooden head. What can it mean?"

"There is the boy!" Alice exclaimed, pointing to the end of the wall.

"Shall I go for him?" demanded Harry.

"Alice, you walk slowly back and see if you can get at him," said the old detective. "Of course if he runs nobody can catch him without collecting a crowd."

Alice obeyed.

As she started the boy shadower vanished.

Meanwhile the Bradys were busy about something else to which as yet no allusion has been made.

It was a sealed letter stuck in a crack in the fence close to the head.

The head itself was carved out of wood and was attached to the fence by a big nail in such a manner as to make it appear in the dusk and from a distance that the man had thrust his head through a hole.

The face more resembled that of a green country youth than anything else.

The hat was real and looked as if it might have been fished out of some rubbish barrel.

But the Bradys had come here to receive a letter.

Here apparently was the letter.

"Ha! No wonder my unknown correspondent said that it would be of no use to question the man!" chuckled the old detective. "He has a touch of humor, it seems. But here is Alice back again. Slide around the rear of the fence, Harry. I saw a man vanish there as we entered the lot. He may be the one who nailed this head here. There is just a possibility that you might strike him. Meanwhile I will open the letter."

Harry ran around the end of the fence.

Alice came hurrying up.

"No use, Mr. Brady," she said. "He took to his heels. He was half a block away when I got there."

"The idea seems to be to see if we got this letter," said the old detective.

"Where is Harry?"

"Gone to look for the man who disappeared around the end of that fence; you saw him perhaps."

"Yes, I saw him."

Old King Brady put on his glasses and examined the envelope.

Across the face written:

"Old King Brady."

"Another evidence that this is the work of an ignorant man," remarked the old detective. "You will observe that this does not say 'addressed,' nor even 'present.' No gentleman ever wrote this."

"It is hardly to be expected. No gentleman could have conceived the absolutely ridiculous idea of nailing that dummy head to the fence."

"Quite so. But let us see what the letter contains."

It contained nothing!

Old King Brady tore open the envelope and what he found inside was just a sheet of blank note paper!

"What can it mean?" exclaimed Alice. "Why should he go to all this trouble simply to fool us? It seems too silly to be credible. But I see we are attracting attention here."

Two men in working clothes and a woman were staring at them from the sidewalk.

At the same instant Harry came hurrying back around the corner of the fence.

"Why, Governor!" he exclaimed, "there is a man around there all right, but he seems to have just died of a hemorrhage of the lungs."

"Ha!" cried Old King Brady. "Killed by the brilliant idea of nailing a wooden head to the fence, I suppose. The only wonder is he didn't die of a hemorrhage of the brain. But let us see."

They all started around the fence.

The two men and the woman trailed after them.

Others had now joined the group.

There were several small boys among them.

"What about the letter?" demanded Harry.

"There is no letter," replied the old detective. "Just a sheet of blank paper enclosed in an envelope addressed to me."

"Which is most singular."

"I am utterly unable to account for it unless we are dealing with a crazy man."

"We are certainly dealing with a dead man here."

They had now rounded the corner of the fence.

There lying on the ground, for here also was a vacant lot, was a small, elderly man with white side whiskers and a white mustache; his hair, what little there was of it, was revealed by the falling off of his derby hat and was also white.

He was plainly dressed and looked like a mechanic.

As he lay partly on his side it was not altogether easy to distinguish the face in the dark.

Blood was issuing from his mouth still, and there was much of it upon the ground.

The eyes were partially closed.

It was perfectly evident that the man was dying if indeed he was not already dead.

"That's the party I saw dodge around the fence all right," said Old King Brady, kneeling at his side.

He caught the right hand and felt for the pulse.

There was not a trace.

"He is gone," said the detective, looking up.

A crowd was collecting.

"Keep those people back, Harry," said Old King Brady. "Find out if anybody knows this fellow. Alice, look for your boy."

Harry flashed his shield and put the question.

But nobody recognized the dead man.

The boy shadower was not in evidence so far as Alice could make out—there were half a dozen boys in the crowd.

Meanwhile Old King Brady rapidly went through the dead man's clothes for clues.

He found nothing beyond a handkerchief, a jack-knife, a key, a snuff box—this was unusual—and one or two odds and ends of no account.

Just then a policeman joined them.

Harry made himself known.

"Do you know this man, officer?" he demanded.

"No," replied the policeman, "I never seen him before. But then I'm a new man on this beat. So that's Old King Brady?"

"There he is. We happened to stumble on this case, but I doubt if Mr. Brady wants to have anything to do with it."

"I suppose not. You are pretty busy people."

"Busy all the time. But here he comes."

"Officer," said Old King Brady, "my partner has informed you, I suppose, that we are detectives?"

"Yes, sir."

"We happened to stumble on this business. I know nothing of the dead man."

"Is he dead?"

"He certainly is. I shall leave the matter in your charge, as I have another and most pressing engagement. My partner, however, will remain here to help you out."

Poor Harry looked disgusted.

He knew what the engagement was.

That evening at eight the mystery of their call to Chicago was to be explained.

"Oh, you need not worry," said Old King Brady, reading his thoughts. "I daresay you will be able to get downtown on time; but we must go, for I have to see the chief of police."

CHAPTER III.

MR. MARMADUKE MOUSER.

Old King Brady and Alice, returning to the Sherman House, sat down to supper.

Before they had half finished their meal Harry joined them.

"Well," demanded the old detective, "what became of the dead man?"

"They took him to the morgue," replied Harry. "The policeman rang for an ambulance and the doctor who came with it pronounced the man dead."

Old King Brady gave a grunt.

"He was dead when I first struck him," he said. "Could they not identify him then?"

"No. A big crowd collected after you left, but nobody appeared to know the old fellow."

"The officer got me to go after a German saloonkeeper who knows everyone in the neighborhood, but even he could not identify the man."

"Very possibly he had not been outside of his house for a long time. The man was far gone in consumption. He bore every appearance of having just risen off a sick bed, and if he did so to play that silly trick on us his motive must have been a strong one or else he was a lunatic and had detectives on the brain. You know we have come up against such people before."

"What shall you do about it?"

"Nothing, unless this case we are to hear about to-night proves to be an English one. In that event it will seem fairly certain that the dead man had a motive for what he did and I shall certainly look into the matter further. We can only wait and see."

"Sometimes this Secret Service business makes me tired," remarked Harry. "If they want to use our services why can't they take us into their confidence? It would seem that we had been connected with the service long enough to entitle us to that."

"You will never be able to regulate the affairs of the United States Secret Service, my boy," laughed the old detective. "Now eat your supper and we will be ready for our man when he comes."

He came at exactly eight o'clock.

First came his card on a silver tray.

It read:

"Mr. Marmaduke Mouser, Scotland Yard."

"Ha!" muttered Old King Brady. "Our case is an English one all right."

"Show him up, boy," he added aloud, and Mr. Mouser followed his card.

He was English all right.

Fearfully English! Astonishingly English! English from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet!

He was a little man and as slim as he was short.

His hair was red, his eyes light blue. He was clean shaved and wore baggy tweed trousers and a bob-tailed coat which hung on him like a bag. In his hand, as he entered the room, he carried a very loud plaid cap.

"Ah! Good evening, Miss! Good evening, gentlemen!" he exclaimed, as he entered the room. "The Bradys and Miss Montgomery, I presume. I am Mouser—Mouser, the detective. Scotland Yard. Ahem!"

And Mr. Mouser gave a nervous tug at his collar.

This seemed to be a weakness of his, amounting almost to St. Vitus' dance, for all through the interview he kept tugging at his shirt collar and never seemed to get it straight.

And having thus introduced himself Mr. Mouser handed Old King Brady a sealed letter.

It was from the chief of the United States Secret Service.

It introduced Mr. Mouser and requested the Bradys to aid him in every possible way and also to refrain from pressing him for any explanation of his business further than what he was voluntarily disposed to give.

Of course the Bradys received the man with all the respect his position in detective circles warranted.

"And now then, Mr. Mouser, what can I do for you?" demanded Old King Brady.

"Well, sir," said the little detective, "the first thing you can do for me is to give me your promise that you will not ask me one single question but just act upon my orders, don't you know?"

"The letter provides for that," replied Old King Brady. "That is understood."

"Very good. Then it is like this. Here we have a noble English family, one of the 'ighest in the United Kingdom. Here on the other side we have a missing heir." Mr. Mouser pronounced it hair and illustrated his point by placing a cent on one side of the table and a dime on the other.

Then he gave a tug at his shirt collar and winked.

"All right," said Old King Brady. "And we want to join the dime to the cent, or in other words to find this missing heir and restore him to his own?"

"Exactly," replied Mouser. "Pre-cisely. But that is something which may prove to be easier said than done. It is like this. The head of that family was a grumpy-frumpy old huss who made life a burden to whoever came in contact with him. He married late in life a hactress, who seems to have been a good enough person in her way. He killed her by ill-treatment within a year. There was a child, a boy which disappeared at the time of his mother's death, haged two weeks. Nurse supposed to have stolen it. Might have been the butler, a man named James Carlow. Both vanished at the same time."

"And the nurse's name?"

"Ellen Feeney. But you are not to ask questions, Mr. Brady. You are to take everything just as I tell it."

"I stand rebuked. Go on."

"Well, sir, so little feeling did this noble lord show in the matter that he never made the least effort to recover his son, as I understand it. He just buried his wife, returned to his bachelor ways and lived on until he died, leaving an enormous property, e-normous, sir! 'Undreds of 'ouses in London, a castle down in the country, another in Scotland with an 'ole village close by, all belonging to him. Then there are stocks and bonds and pictures and jewels, no end of them, all of which belong to-day to this missing hair if he still lives."

Mr. Mouser paused and gave another yank at his shirt collar.

He appeared to be waiting for Old King Brady to say something.

But having no disposition to be called down a second time the old detective merely said:

"Indeed."

"Yes, sir. Now then, who gets all this wealth if the missing hair is dead?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

"Then I will tell you. It goes to a nephew of the dead man. He succeeds to the title and the hestates. There, now I have stated the case."

"And have you nothing further to say?"

"Nothing, except that there is now reason to believe that the child lived and was brought to America; that he

is now or was recently in Chicago. I want to find him and I want your help."

"And you are not even going to tell me the names of these people, Mr. Mouser?"

"It is against my orders, sir."

"Nor by whom you are employed?"

"I am employed by Scotland Yard."

"Of course that is understood."

"It is enough."

"Not for me, sir!" replied Old King Brady emphatically. "You may be working against this boy for all I know. I shall not aid you in that case."

"But your orders from the Secret Service office."

"We are entirely independent of the Secret Service Bureau, although we frequently do work for them. You seem to have exerted some influence to secure our services, but they are not to be had on any such terms. As for names, I shall not press the point. I shall, however, insist upon my right to ask you any question I please, you to answer or not, as you please. I to decide at the end of this interview whether I can help you or not."

Now when Old King Brady had finished these remarks he expected an outburst.

It did not come.

On the contrary Mr. Mouser, with a tug at his shirt collar, said:

"Well, sir, that's fair. That's fair. I perceive that my position won't hold water. Put your questions."

"Then first and foremost is the question in whose interest are you working? That I insist upon knowing."

"Well, sir, I will answer that. We are working in the interest of the missing child, and to that answer I will add, as indeed I was about to state, there is reason to believe that there are parties in Chicago working in the opposite interest who will make way with the lad if they come up with him."

"Now see how important it is for me to know these things. Who is putting up for this?"

"Putting up, sir? Putting up, Mr. Brady? What do you mean?"

"Paying for your work and mine."

"I can name no names."

"It is not necessary, but you can give me an idea in what relation this party or parties stand to the boy?"

"He is the family lawyer who wants to see justice done."

"Perfectly satisfactory. How old is this boy supposed to be?"

"About fifteen."

"In your opinion, which one stole him, the nurse or the butler?"

"I think, sir, they both had a hand in it. The butler was an old family retainer. He was not a professional butler. The noble lord engaged him when he married. The nurse was an acquaintance of my lady's. I think they got their heads together and took the child away for its own protection; my lord was that bitter against his wife that I think they imagined that he might even kill the baby himself."

"And now I understand the situation," said Old King Brady. "There is but one point more which must be made plain."

"And what is that, sir?"

"What reason have you to believe that the boy is in Chicago?"

"Oh, that I was going to explain; anyway, of course. Our information is based on a letter written about a year ago, just after my lord died."

"Oh! He has been dead a year?"

"Yes."

"Well, and the letter?"

"I haven't the original, but I have a copy with the address left off, which I will show you. I will add that this letter, although addressed to the lawyer, seems in some mysterious way to have fallen into the hands of the enemy. There probably were others. This one was procured from the discharged valet of the nephew, who stole it from his master. Here it is."

And Mr. Mouser produced a sheet of paper, upon which was written the following:

"Understanding that"—here was a blank—"is dead, I write to say that the stolen child still lives. Chicago, Ill., is his present home. He can be produced any time by the writer with absolute proofs of his identity. But before acting I want to know where I am coming in. It may be well to remember that"—here followed another blank—"will be quite ready to pay liberally to have me suppress what I know or even to have the boy put out of the way. I am out for money. Let me hear what your views are and you will hear from me again. This makes the third time I have written you and I have received no reply. If I get none to this letter I shall know to whom to apply. Address J. C., care of Batzer & Co., 50— Lake street, Chicago, Ill., U. S. A."

"James Carlow," remarked Old King Brady.

"It would seem so."

"And this letter bore date a year ago?"

"About that."

"Have you seen the criminal?"

"Yes."

"Written by an ignorant man or otherwise?"

"By a ignorant man, but not so very ignorant. There are a few mistakes in spelling. That is all."

"Would you know the handwriting again if you saw it?"

"I should."

Old King Brady took the anonymous letter from his wallet.

Folding it so that only a small part of it could be seen he laid it on the table.

"What is this?" demanded the Scotland Yard man.

"A letter," replied the old detective, watching his face closely.

"Ah, yes, but from whom?"

"My dear sir, I claim the privilege I have afforded you to answer only such questions as I please."

Mouser took out a glass and studied the writing.

Old King Brady studied the face of Mr. Mouser.

"No resemblance whatever," said the English detective at last.

"Ah!" said Old King Brady, and folding up the letter he restored it to his wallet.

"What about that, anyway?" demanded Mouser.

"Nothing."

"You won't tell?"

"No."

"Oh, suit yourself! Do you take up the case with me?"

"Certainly."

"And when are you ready to go to work?"

"Any time. We came here for no other business."

"All right then. What would you advise me to do?"

"Where are you staying?"

"I have taken a room at the Palmer House."

"Very well. Return to it. I will think this business over and let you know to-morrow."

But little more was said.

Mouser seemed a different man from the moment Old King Brady refused to answer questions about the letter.

As soon as he was fairly out of the way Harry broke loose.

"Great Scott!" he cried. "What is Scotland Yard coming to if they put out such a thing as that!"

"They never did," replied Old King Brady quietly.

"My opinion exactly," echoed Alice.

"The man is a patent fraud," said the old detective.

"Did you observe how careful he was to drop his h's at the start and how after he got mad at me for not telling him about the letter he never dropped them once?"

"I didn't notice," said Harry.

"But I did," added Alice. "It is a fact."

"But," urged Harry, "how in the world did he come to get hold of that Secret Service letter and to know that we were here on this business?"

"Ah!" said Old King Brady. "How indeed? That is something we have to find out."

They were all deeply puzzled.

The case seemed a very hard one to solve.

For some moments they sat, regarding each other in silence.

Then Alice suddenly exclaimed:

"But, anyway, this proves that your anonymous correspondent was right, Mr. Brady. We have been offered an English case in Chicago."

"Exactly so," replied the old detective, "and that shall be our case. I propose to work it up for all it is worth."

"Suppose you get the Secret Service Bureau on the long distance telephone and ask them about this man?" suggested Harry.

"No," replied Old King Brady. "We will do nothing of the kind. Let us pretend to work with this singular Mr. Mouser. If we can put up a bad blunder to the Secret Service Bureau it won't do us one bit of harm."

CHAPTER IV.

WILL FINDS HIMSELF UP AGAINST OLD KING BRADY.

Will Wilson saw the fake head sticking against the fence, but he did not see the letter sticking in the crack.

He was as much surprised as the Bradys had been, but in an entirely different way.

For the head was one he had turned on the old model maker's lathe himself and he had seen his father carve out the face.

It was part of an order on which the old consumptive had been slowly working.

It was intended to be used by a clothing dealer as the head of a dummy to be dressed in a suit of country-made clothes.

But the boy shadower did not see the man who ran around the corner of the fence to go to his death, as it proved.

Determined to do his best, Will, after Alice turned back, started to return to the lot.

But just then someone came up behind him and caught him by the arm.

It proved to be his aunt, Mrs. Kindley, with whom he had lived since his earliest recollection.

"Will," she said, "you go on home. Your father wants you. He may be out when you get there. He told me to tell you to stop in till he came back."

"He'll kill himself going out," said Will. "He ought to be in bed."

"That's so," replied the woman, "but I can't do anything with him. You go on home."

And Will went.

He was accustomed to obey his aunt and he never doubted that her orders came from his father.

But the whole business puzzled him.

Will knew very little about his father.

He had been told that his mother died when he was born and that his aunt took him in charge.

Mrs. Kindley was a widow who lived comfortably in a modest way. How she supported herself the boy never knew.

Certainly she did not work, except to take care of her house.

On the other hand she was always complaining of poverty, so it did not seem as if she could have property, yet they lived well enough.

Every Sunday afternoon Mr. Wilson came to call until he took Will to live with him.

The boy understood that his father worked for a wood-carver somewhere, but he never heard where.

He had never heard of the rooms over the stable, nor of the other Will. He knew nothing of these matters now.

It was when Will went to live with his father that the old model maker began to throw out mysterious hints that if Will did as he was told he would some day be a very rich man.

How the wealth was to come he was never informed, but he was particularly cautioned never under any circumstances to mention the matter to his aunt.

On two or three occasions the old model maker came near opening up and letting out more about this mysterious business, but he always checked himself.

When Will urged him he was cut short.

Thus it was all a mystery and it was a pretty puzzling one to Will.

The boy found his father out when he reached the rooms, but the door was locked, so he went in and waited.

It grew dark.

Will lighted the lamp.

He began to be alarmed about his father, for he knew what a sick man he really was.

Of course the first thing Will did was to look for the wooden model of the "Rube," as he called the head.

It was missing.

He had not been mistaken.

What could it all mean?

At last there came a knock on the door.

Will opened it to find a German boy, who lived in the neighborhood, outside.

He scarcely knew the boy and the only name he had ever heard him called by was "Sauer Kraut."

"Say," broke out the boy, "your father's dead!"

"Dead!" gasped Will.

"Yair. He died in de lot up dere by Bellis street. I seen him. Dey say he was murdered. I don' know. Tort I'd come an' tell you, anyhow, dat he'd croaked."

Now Will had never felt the least natural affection for his father, who had never had much to say to him until he took him home.

But this came as a decided shock and naturally.

"Murdered!" he gasped. "It can't be! Why he was half dead, anyhow! Who would murder a man like him?"

"I don' know," replied Sauer Kraut. "All I know is what I'm tellin' yer. Dey tuk him to de morgue because nobody didn't know who he was."

"But if you saw him, you knew. Why didn't you tell——"

"Dassent! Bill Toumey was wit me. He says don't say noting or we'll get arrested as witnesses and put in jail."

Will caught his hat and blew out the lamp.

"Come on around there with me!" he cried.

"No," said Sauer Kraut, "he's gone. 'Tain't no use."

"Come!" ordered Will, and downstairs they went, but Sauer Kraut did not follow him to the lot. He deserted as soon as they hit the street.

Will let him go and ran to the lot.

The wooden head had vanished. So had the coat.

There was nobody around to give any explanation.

Will never thought of going around back of the fence.

His first idea was that Sauer Kraut had been putting up a job on him.

But this seemed improbable.

Will looked up at the brick house.

"The people in there ought to know if there has been any excitement around here," he said to himself.

He rang the bell and, inquiring of a woman who came to the door, was informed that a dead man had indeed been found in the lot behind the house and that the ambulance had carried him off.

Will was now terribly excited, of course.

His aunt lived only a few blocks away and he resolved to go and tell her what he had heard.

So he hurried to her flat, but it was only to find the door locked and there was no response to his knocking.

"Someone else has told her," thought Will. "She has gone to the morgue."

He resolved to go there, too.

He knew all about the morgue, for he had occasion to

go there when he worked for the Pinkerton Detective Agency, so he lost no time in getting there now.

Of course he was admitted when he told his story and there, sure enough, he found his father dead.

"And his secrets have died with him unless my aunt knows," thought Will. "This may be the finish of my great chance he was always talking about."

He pushed his inquiries further.

The morgue attendant assured him that his father had died of a hemorrhage.

He also assured him that he was the only person who had called to inquire and advised him to go to the police station and report.

Instead of that Will went back to his aunt's again.

The door was still locked and no one came to open it in response to all the knocking the boy did.

Will went to the station then.

The sergeant took his name and his aunt's name and address.

He inquired about what was to be done with the remains and Will told him that he supposed his aunt would attend to that.

No effort was made to detain him, and back Will went to Mrs. Kindley's and waited till midnight, but the woman did not return.

He then went home and to bed, over-sleeping himself in the morning, to be at last awakened by a loud knocking on the door.

He jumped up and, pulling on his trousers, opened it.

Instantly he recognized his visitor as Old King Brady, whom by his father's orders he had shadowed the night before.

"Does Mr. James Wilson live here?" inquired the old detective, who was alone.

"That's my father," said Will, "and he's dead."

"I know it," replied the old detective kindly. "So you are his son. You are just the person I want to see. I'm coming in."

Now Will, when with the Pinkerton agency, had always heard Old King Brady spoken of in terms of the highest respect.

In a way he felt proud and somewhat over-awed to have met so famous a man. He opened the door wide and invited him in.

His active brain worked rapidly.

With his father dead, why should he hold anything back from this remarkable man?

Will had no faith whatever in his aunt.

In fact he disliked her exceedingly.

He knew that she dosed herself with drugs daily; he knew that she was dishonest. He had been rejoiced to get away from her.

"If there is anything coming to me she'll do me out of it if she can," the boy said to himself. "Old King Brady has solved lots of mysteries for other people, why shouldn't he solve mine? I'm just going to answer every question he asks."

The old detective looked about the room curiously.

Then he passed through the dark bedroom into the room in the rear.

This was the kitchen and also the workshop.

There were many wooden heads here on the work

bench and here also was the lathe on which they had been turned and the old man's carving tools displayed.

Old King Brady glanced at all these and then said:

"What is your name?"

"Will, sir. Will Wilson."

"Will Wilson. Now then; my boy, I want to ask you a few questions. You may not be disposed to answer them, but if you are sensible enough to take my advice you will answer freely."

"I will answer any question you ask me to, sir. I made up my mind to that when you first came in."

"So? Did you, then? And why?"

"Because down to Pinkerton's they always said you were a square man and I don't know what all this business means, no more than the dead!"

"Ha! What do you know about Pinkerton's?"

"I worked for them last year."

"You did?"

"Yes, sir."

"What at? Office boy?"

"No, sir. I was a shadower."

"Oh, indeed! And who did you shadow?"

"It was against the rules of the office to tell, sir. Even though I don't work there now I don't think I have any right to give their business away."

"Spoken like a man!" cried Old King Brady, with so genial a smile that Will's heart was captured at once.

"Ain't I right?" he demanded.

"Of course you are," replied the old detective. "I should not have asked you. Now I'm going to sit down and have a little talk with you. Yesterday afternoon, when I came to Chicago, you shadowed me and my two partners, one of whom is a lady, from the Canal street station to the Sherman House, and from there to the vacant lot at the corner of Bellis street, is it not so?"

"Yes, sir. That's what I did."

"And why did you do it?"

"Because my father told me to."

"And why did he tell you to?"

"I don't know, sir, any more than you do. I don't know much about my father. I have only lived with him a year. I——"

"We will come back to that," interrupted Old King Brady. "Now tell me another thing. I saw you look around the corner of that house while we were in the lot. Of course you must have seen the wooden head which was nailed against the fence then?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did your father put that head there?"

"I suppose he must have, sir. I know he and I made it."

"So? Your father appears to have been a model maker?"

"That was his business, sir, but lately he has been almost too sick to do anything. He was in bed most of the time."

"Consumption?"

"Yes, sir."

"With that head was an envelope which contained only a blank sheet of paper."

"I didn't see that."

"Here it is. You see the envelope is addressed to me. Is that your father's writing?"

"It sure is, sir."

"And why should he put this thing there with that dummy head and that when he was actually dying?"

"I don't know any more than you do."

"Is this your father's writing?"

Old King Brady produced the anonymous letter.

Will instantly identified the writing.

"Do you want me to read the letter?" he asked.

"No, it is not necessary," was the reply. "Now then, boy, I have asked all my questions and I am satisfied that you have answered them truthfully. Let us go a step further. Have you no idea what made your father act as he did?"

"I was going to tell you my idea when you interrupted me, sir."

"Ha! So? I said we would come back to that later. Let us come back to it now. What is your idea?"

"He had been telling me for the last year that some day I was going to be a rich man. Yesterday he told me that if I wanted to be I must get busy and shadow you."

"Did he, then? This is all very interesting. Now tell me all about this business and I won't interrupt you again."

And Will complied.

What he told was, of course, most interesting to the old detective.

It seemed to him when Will rounded up his story that if there had been any truth in what Mr. Marmaduke Mouser told him the night before, then this boy was probably the missing son of the "noble lord."

But Old King Brady had never heard of the other Will, who lived over the stable up the alley, and upon whom James Wilson had waited like a servant.

Nor had Will No. 2, so he could not post the old detective on this point.

Old King Brady now suggested that probably Mrs. Kindley might have something to add to her nephew's narrative.

He told Will to finish dressing himself and to eat his breakfast, saying that afterward they would go to the woman's house.

And this they did.

But Mrs. Kindley's door was still locked.

Old King Brady made short work of this obstacle, however, for he opened the door with a skeleton key.

He found the widow's (Kindley's) rooms in the greatest disorder.

Everything of any value in the way of clothes was missing.

There was every evidence of a hurried flight.

Mrs. Kindley was gone and it was very plain to the old detective that she had no intention of returning.

CHAPTER V.

THE CLEW IN THE COAL SCUTTLE.

Old King Brady left the Sherman House early that morning.

He called up the police station and had thus learned who the dead man was.

It was the wish to investigate the situation further that sent him to the model maker's home.

But before he left Harry and Alice received their instructions.

Harry's took him up Lake street to the store of Batzer & Co., which had been mentioned in the copy of the letter exhibited by Mr. Marmaduke Mouser.

Harry was thinking of Mouser as he walked up Lake street.

It seemed to him that in whatever light the situation might be viewed that the man was clearly a stupid fellow.

For a bright man to attempt to impersonate a Scotland Yard detective after any such fashion was scarcely to be thought of.

"He is no detective and he is merely a fool," Harry determined.

Therefore, while at first he hardly expected that anything would come out of the visit he was about to pay now, he was not quite so sure.

The place turned out to be a shabby store, in the windows of which tailors' dummies and cigar store Indians were displayed.

Harry entered and asked for Mr. Batzer.

A young man answered to the name, and to him Harry introduced himself as a detective and stated as much of the case as seemed best.

"It is a fact that we were asked to look out for such letters," said Mr. Batzer, "but none ever came. What is there about the business, anyway?"

"It seems to be a clew in a case we are working on," was the reply. "It would help us greatly if you can inform us who this 'J. C.' is."

"I don't know. We were asked to look out for these letters by a working model maker, whose goods we sometimes buy. His name is James Wilson. He told me that this business concerned a friend of his, but as I say, nothing ever came of it. I had forgotten the incident completely until you recalled it to my mind."

"And where does this man live?" asked Young King Brady.

"Well, that is what we don't know. For a number of years he lived over a stable in Bishop's Alley, off Halstead street. About a year ago he moved from there. After that he would never leave his address. He's a queer old fellow. We haven't seen him in a long time. He was in consumption and last time I saw him he looked as if he could not last long. He may be dead."

And this was all that could be got out of Mr. Batzer.

But it was enough to start Young King Brady to wondering if he had not wronged Mr. Marmaduke Mouser after all.

He had not failed to ask if anybody else had been to Mr. Batzer to inquire about the letter business, and the answer was in the negative.

Young King Brady now determined to go to Bishop's Alley and see what could be learned.

Here he came up against the stableman.

"Yes, Wilson lived upstairs here for years with his son," the stableman said. "He moved away between two days about a year ago and nobody ever knew where he went. Don't know why he did it, either. He didn't owe

me anything. His rent was paid up to the end of the month, which was two weeks ahead."

"Perhaps he owed others in the neighborhood," Young King Brady suggested.

"No," said the man. "I don't think he did. He was a queer fellow, anyway. Always kept to himself. He used to dress up his boy like a little prince, and he waited on him at table as if he was the child's servant. The boy told me that. We never could make him out."

Harry pressed the stableman for further details about the first Will and got a few.

He left feeling no doubt that Wilson was none other than James Carlow, the butler; that Mouser's story was true and that the first Will was the missing heir.

And then came the awakening.

Harry, acting under orders, now started for James Wilson's rooms on Blue Island avenue.

Old King Brady told him that he might look in there and that perhaps he might find him there.

As it chanced the two met close to the vacant lot on the corner of Bellis street, where the dummy head had been displayed.

"Well!" demanded the old detective, "and what luck."

"I guess it's all true, Governor. I went to Batzer's. The old man worked for them, making models. He did ask them to receive letters addressed to 'J. C.' about a year ago, but none ever came. He formerly lived with his son in an alley off Halstead street," and Harry went on to tell about Will No. 1.

"Well," exclaimed Old King Brady, "this is strange! Now hear my story."

And he told all about Will No. 2.

"Don't sound like the same boy," admitted Harry.

"Not at all, as you perceive. Moreover this boy assures me that he never lived with his father until a year ago. Date seems to correspond to the time the old man made his sudden and secret move."

"It certainly does. Do you think your boy lied?"

"As I have just told you I do not think so, and yet it may be so."

"And where is this boy shadower now?"

"Shadowing."

"What?"

"Just as I say. He is shadowing. He formerly worked for the Pinkerton's, now he is working for the Bradys. He is the latest addition to our staff."

"Governor, explain."

"I am about to do it. The case is this. After we broke into this Mrs. Kindley's rooms and I became satisfied that the woman had decamped we returned to the street. We had scarcely got clear of the door when a man of peculiar appearance came along and entered the house. He saw me, and, Harry, he knew me. I am positive of it, although I cannot place him."

"A crook, think?"

"I certainly do think so. At all events he is a man with some sort of twist in his make-up. No sooner had he vanished through the doorway than the boy informed me that the same man had visited his aunt twice within a week. I asked if the man knew him. Will thought not. The first time he called he (Will) had been sent into another room and told to stay there until the man had gone

before he was allowed to enter. The second time Will saw him going into the house while he was on the street. Instantly it occurred to me that since this boy had some experience in shadowing I might as well let him try his hand at it, so I set him to work while I came on here to meet you."

"All these things seem to prove the truth of Mouser's story. If Wilson wrote the anonymous letter, and you seem to have proved that, then it seems to me that this boy who lived over the stable and was dressed like a prince and waited upon by the old man must be the missing heir."

"That's the way it seems at first glance, I admit. Still we must not jump at conclusions. Against that theory we have this other Will, also claiming to be the son of old Wilson and claiming to have been told by his father that he would come into a fortune some day and that shadowing us was going to help bring it about."

"That's right. Do you imagine Will No. 2, as we will call our boy shadower; knows Will No. 1?"

"Impossible to tell. Easily learned, though, when we next see him. His seems to be a singularly frank and open nature. I am inclined to believe everything he says. But let us go on to the old model maker's rooms, Harry. I have made no search there and I want to do so. We may find some clew if this Kindley woman has not cleaned everything out."

"I persist in my theory," said Harry. "Mouser has told the truth, whether he is a detective or whether he isn't. James Wilson was James Carlow; this Kindley woman, instead of being his sister, is Ellen Feeney, the nurse. Will No. 1 is the missing heir."

"You are very positive in your conclusions. Remember now that you have said all this and we will see how close to your theory the case turns out."

"If we ever see the end of it. Now that Wilson is dead and the woman has disappeared, it looks to me as if it was likely to prove a very hard case to solve."

"Nonsense!" cried Old King Brady. "When did I ever give up before I had begun? Hard to solve the case may be, but we are going to solve it just the same."

By this time they had reached the house where the old model maker lived and they went upstairs.

Will had locked the door behind him when he and Old King Brady went out, but the lock readily yielded to skeleton keys.

They locked themselves in and began to search the three-room flat in their usual methodical way.

The front room had been the model maker's bed chamber, the dark room Will's, while the rear room was used as workshop, kitchen and living room combined.

Half an hour's work brought no results.

What Old King Brady hoped to find were letters or papers bearing on the mystery, but there was nothing of the sort.

Will could have told him that his father made a practice of destroying every letter he received.

They wound up their search in the workshop.

"Well," remarked Harry, "I don't see that we can do any more."

Old King Brady looked around.

"Ha! I see one thing we have left undone!" he exclaimed.

"And what is that?"

"Coal scuttle."

"It is full of coal."

"Exactly, but who filled it? Was it absolutely empty when it was filled. Sometimes people throw papers in coal scuttles. It would be interesting to know if there is anything in the clew lying under that coal."

"We will soon find out then," said Harry, and he dumped the contents of the scuttle upon the floor.

And there, sure enough, lying on top of the little heap of coal was a twisted scrap of paper.

Searching for clews is a peculiar business.

It is impossible to predict where they are going to turn up.

And now, sure enough, one had turned up in the old model maker's coal scuttle.

Old King Brady picked up the paper without the least hope.

But as he smoothed it out he perceived that it had writing upon it.

"Open the head. You will find instructions inside."

Thus read the writing and it corresponded perfectly with the address on the envelope and the handwriting of the anonymous letter.

"Well!" exclaimed Harry. "Who is the fool now?"

"Here stand a pair of them!" cried Old King Brady. "And we let that head slip through our fingers while we went chasing after a dead man."

"Perhaps the police took it to the station."

"Let us hope so."

"But how do you account for this find?"

"Don't be forever asking my opinion, Harry. Form your own theories. Let us have one now."

"Well, then the old man was half dead, anyway. He scrawled these words on one side of a sheet of note paper, intending to put it in the envelope. Something attracting his attention; as he tore the sheet in half he put the blank half into the envelope, twisted up the other and threw it into the coal scuttle."

"Right! Your theory is my theory, and it is the only reasonable one. For some unexplained reason James Wilson wanted to keep in the background and he conceived this strange scheme of communicating with us anonymously. Our blunder was when we allowed that head to slip through our hands."

"Let us go to the station at once," said Harry.

They went.

They were fortunate enough to find there the policeman who had joined them in the lot.

But he knew nothing of the head.

He had not even observed it. He was quite sure that no policeman had removed it from the fence or it would have been brought to the station.

And the Bradys could not even say that the head was in place when the policeman came into the lot, for when they left the dead man they went around the other side of the brick house, where there was another vacant lot.

And thus the clew in the coal scuttle, important as it was, seemed likely to come to naught.

"We have made a bad break," declared Old King

Brady after they left the station. "At any cost we must find that head."

CHAPTER VI.

THE BOY SHADOWER GOES A-SHADOWING.

When Old King Brady told Will Wilson to start in and shadow the peculiar-looking man who had entered the tenement where Mrs. Kindley lived, he put ten dollars into his hand.

"If he takes to a cab or an automobile you will probably lose him," he remarked. "However, this money may help to make it a success for you. Give me the change when you report at the Sherman House, where I am staying."

"He wants to try me out," thought Will. "Mebbe he means to give me a steady job. I should like right well to go to New York and work for the Bradys."

He resolved to make as thorough a job of his shadowing as it was possible to do.

Meanwhile the man was still in the tenement.

Will slid up the stairs.

Mrs. Kindley's rooms were on the top floor and there, sure enough, Will got a view of him from halfway up the top flight.

He was knocking vigorously on Mrs. Kindley's door.

The boy shadower lost not an instant in getting out of the house and across the street.

After a little the man came out.

He started for Blue Island avenue, Mrs. Kindley's rooms being half a square down a side street.

Will trailed on after him.

He had been able to get a good view of the man whom we must now describe as he appeared to Will.

To start in we will state that he was a person of fifty at least and dressed like a gentleman of the old school.

He wore light trousers, a Prince Albert coat, buttoned tight around him, patent leathers and fawn-colored spats, a shiny plug hat and a four-in-hand tie with a fine diamond scarfpin.

Away back in 1870 the man would have been pronounced a "howling swell," but his plug hat and tan gloves, not to mention the spats, made him look rather out of place on Blue Island avenue, Chicago.

As for his build it was slight; concerning his nose it was enormous and decidedly his most prominent feature.

In reference to his eyes they were gray and very deep set. They were wicked eyes and had a steely glitter. They were the eyes of a man who would not hesitate to "do" his best friend.

In the matter of the rest of his face it was sallow and the cheeks were sunken. He was clean shaven, except for a bristly iron-gray mustache.

When Old King Brady first looked at him he was reminded of an old-time New York confidence man whom he once knew.

But that man was dead and buried ten years at least, as Old King Brady happened to know.

Such was Will Wilson's man and he continued to walk on down Blue Island avenue, covering several squares.

"He is going to take a cab, surest thing," thought Will. "He doesn't belong around here, and if he wasn't head-

ing for a cab he would take a car. If he does get into a cab I'm a goner, unless I can hit one myself."

Here was a problem.

But Will was not brand new at shadowing. He had been up against a similar situation before.

From the moment he left his aunt's house he had the thing in mind.

Cabs are scarce out Blue Island way.

It was useless to hope to be able to hire one. Will had another scheme.

Presently he spied a boy of his own age driving a light business wagon in the direction which he was going.

Upon the side of the wagon was a sign which read: "J. Baxter, Plumbing and Gasfitting." The address was well down on the South Side. In the back of the wagon lay a coil of lead pipe.

Will jumped out into the roadway and hailed the boy.

"Say, give us a ride and I'll give you half a dollar," he said. "I'll tell you why when I get in."

The promise looked good to the plumber's boy and he pulled up long enough to let Will to get up beside him on the seat.

"What about dat?" he asked. "Why don't you take a car."

"Say," whispered Will, confidentially, "I'm a detective. See that guy on ahead there on the right? Him with the stove-pipe dicer, I mean. Well, he's my man."

"Ah, g'wan! What you givin' us?" sneered the plumber's boy. "Half a plunk!" Will was quick as a flash to respond, and he dropped the coin into the boy's hand.

"Honest!" he said, "I'm working for the Pinkerton Detective Agency. Say, I was put to shadowing that guy, all in a hurry. I'm afraid he'll take a cab. If he does then I'm in the soup. That's why I flagged you."

"What's he done?" demanded the boy.

"Forger," said Will, mysteriously. "Big gun. The Pinkertons don't want to pull him in just yet. They want to know where he holds out; so that they can get hep to the rest of the gang—see?"

"Well, if he takes a cab do you expect me to take you after it? I've got me own business. I'll get de bounce if I don't get back wid dis poipe what I'm fetchin' from de factory to de store."

"Not for half a plunk, that's sure," said Will; "but if you don't mind going a little out of your way for two plunks more that might be the case. What do you get a week?"

"Four."

"Well, then two and a half is more than half of four. It's up to you. Slow up a little, will you? Don't want to get ahead of him."

And as the plumber's boy did slow up without raising any objection Will considered the battle half won.

"Mebbe he'll go down on the South Side, anyway," he said. "That's where you hold out, if your sign don't lie."

"That's right," said the boy.

"And as for being late," added Will, "it would be as easy as pie to loosen a nut or pull out a pin just before you run in and account for it that way."

"No," said the boy, "my boss is too sharp for dat sort of ting. But I'll drive slow. You can keep your eye on him till you see what you are going to have to do."

"All right," replied Will. "Mebbe we can strike some sort of a bargain, anyway."

And now down on the next square Will spied a cab standing at the curb.

He called the boy's attention to it.

"Mebbe it's his," he said.

"We shall soon know," replied the boy, and he asked further questions about the forger, getting a weird yarn in exchange. Will even gave the man with the spats a name.

And, sure enough, straight for the cab the man headed and, opening the door, jumped in.

"I've got to have a cab. That's a sure thing," thought Will.

This was at the corner of West Twelfth street.

The plumber's place was on La Salle street, near Twenty-eighth.

"You see," said Will, "I am right."

"Dat's what's de matter," replied the boy. "How much will you gimme to trail dat cab as long as I can?"

"Dollar, if you trail it far. Two, if you trail it home."

"We'll see," said the boy. "You better gimme de dollar now. I don't mind going a little out of my road."

He got it.

It was necessary to keep him in good humor.

And now the shadowing of the boy shadower had assumed businesslike proportions.

The cab crossed the river and kept on towards the lake front, turning south at Dearborn street.

This looked like a long run down on the South Side, perhaps.

But before they had gone far the cab stopped in front of a drug store, and the man got out and went in.

Nearby on the next block was a hotel, and in front of it several cabs were standing.

Will saw his chance.

"One of those cabs looks good to me," he said, "but if you will stick to the job I'll stick to you."

"Can't!" said the boy. "I wisht I could."

"Then put me down in front of that hotel."

It was done.

Will looked back and saw the cab still standing by the drug store.

Picking out his man from among the drivers he found little difficulty in persuading him to do the shadowing act, but the man demanded five dollars, and that in advance.

"You get it if you won't dump me," said Will.

"I won't dump you," replied the driver. "I must say I don't altogether believe the yarn you have been giving me, but if you give me five dollars I'll see you through."

And Will parted with the cash.

Two minutes later he wished he had not.

For the man with the spats came hastily out of the drug store and said something to the cabby, who immediately drove off, while the man walked on towards the small hotel in front of which Will stood.

The driver laughed heartily.

"And now you don't want me," he said. "He's coming here, most likely. Perhaps you would like to get back your five plunks. Well, you won't!"

"When I ask for them back it will be time enough to

talk," replied the boy shadower, "but don't you dump me, that's all."

"And what will you do if I do dump you, kid?"

"Report you to the Pinkertons. They'll make things hot for you."

"I s'pose dey could if dey tried," muttered the driver, and after that he stood silently watching the man with the spats.

"I'm going around on the other side of the cab," said Will. "I don't want him to catch on to me."

"All right, kiddy," replied the driver, "and if he goes into the hotel I'll consider myself engaged to you for an hour, anyway, if you want to have it so."

Will slid around in front of the horses and continued his watch from the other side.

Soon the man with the spats came up to the cab.

It was a genuine surprise when he turned suddenly upon the driver and said:

"Driver, are you engaged?"

"No, sir," was the prompt reply.

"Liar!" thought Will. "I'll get square with you!"

"I want you to drive me to 7—th street and the Lake Front," said the man. "Can you do it?"

"Certainly, sir."

"How much?"

A price was named.

The man disputed it.

The driver came down a little.

The man accepted.

"All right," he said. "I'll be out in a minute," and with that he went into the hotel.

"Kiddy!" called the driver.

"Hello!" replied Will.

"How's dat?"

"Do you mean to dump me?"

"Dump nothing!"

"Why didn't you let him take another cab and then trail him with me."

"Gee! What's de matter wid yer? You hain't even half a shadower! Wid him inside and you on de box, can dere be anny better arrangement? Nit, I don't think."

Will saw the point and felt that he had been foolish.

"Well, I s'pose that will be all right, but I ought to get back my five," he said.

"An' dat's what you don't!" laughed the driver. "Dis is my lucky day an' I don't see where you've got anny kick comin'."

Will now concluded that it was actually all right, so he said no more.

After a little the man came out of the hotel.

"Ready," he said. "Mind now, 7—th street and the Lake Front."

With that he popped into the cab.

Will lost not an instant in climbing on the box.

"Now we've got him," said the driver. "What's he been doing, anyway?"

"I don't know," replied Will. "I was told to shadow him, that's all. Ever see the man before?"

"Never."

"Probably he just went in there to get a drink."

"Looks so. He's no steady here. I should know him if he was."

But little talk passed between them during the long ride.

Again and again Will peered down into the cab through the little window to make sure of his man.

At last having passed Jackson Park they began to draw near to their destination.

Suddenly the man called up through the window:

"Driver, oh, driver! You can let me off here!"

The driver pulled in and Will jumped down before the cab had fairly come to a halt.

"Did I dump you?" demanded the driver, as he made the move. "Come and tell me how it all ends."

The man got out and paid the bill.

Then instead of going on towards the destination he had given he turned into Jackson Park.

It was easy work for the boy shadower now.

The man appeared to be in no hurry.

Lighting a cigar, he sauntered along in a careless fashion.

"I don't believe there is anything going to come out of this?" thought Will, who was really discouraged sometimes; "but what in the world did he want with Aunt Nell?"

This was the problem, for he it remembered this was the third time the man with the spats had called on Mrs. Kindley.

At last he came close to the Lake Front.

Here there was a covered belvidere, where people could sit and look off on Lake Michigan.

The man with the spats turned into the belvidere.

There was but one occupant, a woman plainly dressed, who wore a brown veil down over her face.

As she saw the man approaching she half rose and raised the veil.

Will saw then that the woman was Mrs. Kindley, his aunt.

CHAPTER VII.

ALICE ACTS FOR DETECTIVE MOUSER.

Young King Brady had carried out his orders to some purpose, it would seem, and it is now necessary to learn what Alice Montgomery's orders were and how she executed them.

Alice's orders were simple.

"We want to know all that can be learned about Mr. Marmaduke Mouser," Old King Brady said to his female partner. "I shall leave it in your hands, Alice, to see what can be done in that line."

And in a case like this the first thing to do manifestly was to go to the Palmer House and make a few inquiries.

As Alice is personally known to the manager of every prominent hotel in Chicago she anticipated no trouble in finding out all the Palmer House people knew about their guest.

But before going there Alice, although she did not mention it to Old King Brady, determined to do a little business on her own account.

Mr. Mouser's face was a peculiar one and yet no attempt had been made to change it; of that Alice was sure.

Now as it happened Alice had an acquaintance in New York, a female detective who had once worked for the

Scotland Yard people, as indeed Alice herself did in former years.

This woman was now well married and resided at a fashionable hotel in New York, and this hotel Alice proceeded to get on the long distance telephone.

It took a little time to get the woman at the other end of the wire, but at last Alice's call, "Is that you, Annie?" was answered in the affirmative and the question, "Where are you followed?"

"Chicago," replied Alice. "Look here, Annie, you are only a year out of the Yard. Is there a detective over there named Marmaduke Mouser?"

"Sure, my dear," replied Annie. "One of the best. He came into the business since your time. But what about him?"

"Why we are up against a man here who purports to be that party. Old King Brady had his doubts. Can you describe him?"

Annie could and did.

In a general way the description she gave certainly fitted the man who had called on the Bradys at the Sherman House the night before.

Alice went to the Palmer House then.

"Oh, Miss Montgomery!" exclaimed the manager. "Glad you happened in. There is a party here who has just rung his bell, asking that we send for one of your firm. Old King Brady is at the Sherman House, he says."

"Yes. You refer to an Englishman named Mouser?"

"That's the party. He blew in here last night. He has suddenly been taken sick. We have sent for a doctor and he wanted Old King Brady to be notified."

"I see. He has business with us. Know anything about him? We don't."

"No more do I. He seems a peculiar person."

"Tell him I am here. If he wants to see me I will wait on him in his room if he is presentable. What's the matter with the man?"

"Stomach ache. He thinks he is going to have appendicitis. He lays it to our beastly American cooking."

The manager sent a page to interview the English detective.

The answer came back that he would be very glad to see Alice, and when she was admitted to the room she found Mr. Mouser lying on the bed with a comfortable over him, apparently in great pain.

"Oh, Miss Montgomery, I am so glad to see you!" he exclaimed. "You find me helpless. I believe I am booked for happendicitis. Dear me, I don't know what I shall ever do and I had a most himportant hengagement on 'and."

Alice talked to the man for a few minutes about his complaint.

"You wanted to see Old King Brady," she said. "Will I do? He was out when I left the hotel. I doubt if he returns before afternoon."

"Out on our case?"

"I believe so."

"Really! I felt quite despondent when I left you last night. I was in 'opes Old King Brady could suggest something."

"You gave him so little to build on."

"I gave 'im all I could, my dear lady. I know it was very unsatisfactory, but there is one other point I am going to give you now if you are willing to hact upon it. I intended to follow up that clew myself, but this infernal hillness prevents."

"What is that?"

"There is a woman in this town whom we at the Yard suspect may prove to be this Ellen Feeney. She wrote to the lawyer I mentioned last night hunder the name of Burns, saying that if we would communicate with her we might learn something about the missing hair. 'Ere's my notebook. You'll find the haddresses in front, and Mrs. Burns' haddress is among them. I hintended to look her up to-day, but there is no chance that I shall be hable to, I'm hafraid. She is 'ousekeeper for a man who is custodian of some hunfinished building."

Thus saying, Mr. Mouser drew a morocco-bound notebook from his pocket and passed it over to Alice.

There were many addresses in front, all English.

They were pen-written and at the end of the list was one scrawled in lead pencil, seemingly in the same handwriting. It read:

"Mrs. Rhoda Burns, care of Mr. Carstairs, custodian Dowler Museum, 7—th street and Lake Front, Chicago, Ill."

"That is miles from here," remarked Alice.

"Is it?" said Mouser. "I don't know. I've been so sick that I 'aven't 'ad a chance to find out. Could you go there and see what she has to say for herself and report to me."

Alice reflected for a minute and assented.

"Possibly something might come of it," she thought.

She had heard of the Dowler Museum.

Even with her suspicions of the man, which were now very much allayed, she could see no risk in complying with his request.

Just then a doctor came.

At Mouser's request Alice remained within call while the examination was on.

Soon she was summoned.

The doctor assured her that the case was one of appendicitis and that Mouser would have to be operated on at once if his life was to be saved.

"No, no, no!" cried the little Englishman. "Nothing of the sort! You're not going to cut me up. I've had these attacks before. I will pull out of it all right."

"Oh, very well!" replied the doctor. "Suit yourself," and away he went.

Mouser then had a few remarks to make about American doctors.

Then he declared that he felt better already. Would Alice go and see Mrs. Burns? It would be such a relief to his mind. In the evening he would be glad to see Old King Brady again. He had made up his mind to break orders and talk more fully, for he did not think it was fair to expect them to do much on the case with so little to go by as he had given them.

Altogether Alice came to entertain a better opinion of the man and she again expressed her willingness to wait on Mrs. Burns.

So Mouser gave her his card and to 7—th street and Lake Front Alice went, going to Jackson Park by the elevated and walking the rest of the way.

Now the unfinished Dowler Museum was quite a feature of Chicago at the time of which we write.

Dowler was a Board of Trade man; an old bachelor, who made millions cornering wheat.

His business reputation was the very worst, but this did not seem to make any difference, for he rolled up the dollars just the same.

Finally, as years advanced and an incurable disease overtook him, Dowler determined to build a museum for the exhibition of American machinery; a sort of permanent industrial fair.

He owned a tract of land on the Lake Front, and here he began the erection of an enormous building.

A million and over was spent in one way and another and still the building was not completed, nor anywhere near it, on the day Dowler blew his brains out in his office.

Then when the examination of his affairs followed it was found that he was all tied up in money matters and had lost practically everything.

The city claimed the building under deed of gift.

The creditors also claimed it.

The result was litigation and there the big skeleton stood, waiting for the lawyers to gobble it up.

When Alice approached it she saw that it had been roofed in, but the whole interior, with the exception of one wing, seemed to be incomplete.

This wing had the window sashes in and alongside the door in front was the sign:

"Ring the bell for the Custodian."

Now, of course, Alice had noticed the similarity of the name Carstairs to that of Carlow. She and Mouser had spoken of it.

Determined to make sure that there was no trap, Alice walked on until she met a mounted policeman.

To him she made herself known and asked about Mr. Carstairs.

"Yes," said the policeman, "he is the custodian of the Dowler Museum. He has been for the last three years."

"Do you know him?" inquired Alice. "I have a little business with him. I want to find out what sort of a man I am going up against if I can. That is why I spoke to you."

But the officer only knew Mr. Carstairs by sight and he described him as an elderly Englishman.

And this again suggested James Carlow.

It was now nearly noon, for Alice had not hurried herself, and she remained some time at the Palmer House.

She now went directly to the custodian's door and pulled the bell.

There was quite a long wait.

Alice rang three times.

At last the door was opened by a tall, stout woman, dressed in black.

"Who did you want to see?" she asked.

"Mrs. Rhoda Burns," replied Alice.

"I am Mrs. Burns. What did you want to see me for?"

"I came from this party," replied Alice, producing Mouser's card.

The woman's face changed.

"Is that so!" she exclaimed. "Then they have sent someone at last. Why did not this man come himself?"

"He only reached Chicago last night. He was taken sick, so I came in his stead."

Mrs. Burns came out on the broad granite steps and partially closed the big door.

"But I want to see a detective," she said, lowering her voice to a whisper.

"I am a detective."

Alice displayed her shield.

"You know all about this business?"

"I know something about it—what Mr. Mouser told me."

"What is your name?"

"Alice Montgomery."

"Are you a Scotland Yard detective?"

"No: New York. I am a partner in the Brady Detective Bureau. We are acting with Mr. Mouser in this case."

"So? The child is here."

"Well! I want to know all you would have told Mr. Mouser."

"I'll tell you all, but you better see the child. I'm afraid of my life to talk for fear of Carstairs. He is liable to drop on us any time. Will you come into my room? We can talk in private there and if you can take the boy away with you I shall be so glad."

She opened the door and stepped inside.

Her manner was most earnest.

She was not a bad-looking woman. Alice saw no ground for suspicion.

She stepped into a wide hall, partially plastered.

The woman closed and locked the door.

"Follow me quick, Miss Montgomery," she said. "If Carstairs sees us there will be trouble sure. But perhaps you are afraid. If you are you better go out and I'll bring the boy to you to-night wherever you say."

"No, no!" replied Alice. "Lead on. I am not afraid."

The woman hurried forward and turned into a cross corridor.

At the same instant a gruff voice was heard behind them, calling:

"Rhoda! Rhoda! Who have you there?"

"Run!" cried the woman, clutching Alice's hand. "Oh, he is a terrible man! He will set the dog on us! Run!"

"Rhoda!" repeated the voice. "I saw you! Don't you know what I said? No strangers here! Back, or I unloose the dog!"

"We better go back!" said Alice.

"No, no! In my room you will be safe enough," was the reply. "Oh, I am so sorry you ever came in!"

At the same instant the deep baying of some large dog was heard in the other corridor.

A second later a huge Dane, as big as a calf, turned the corner.

"Oh, my goodness!" gasped the woman. "We are lost!"

CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT ABOUT ALICE?

"Harry, we must find that head," repeated Old King Brady. "Somebody took it off the fence. Let us get right around there and see what can be done."

"The people in the brick house may know something about it," suggested Harry.

"It is possible," replied the old detective. "Then again some boy may have carried it off. You will remember that there were a number of boys in the lot when the crowd collected about the dead man."

"The search would be a good job for your boy shadower, Governor. Probably he knows most of the boys in the neighborhood."

"Possibly! Possibly! But let us see what we can do."

They did nothing.

An hour's work failed to bring them any tidings of the head.

In the end they went back to the police station where Old King Brady left a special request that the police aid them in finding the wooden head.

The Bradys then returned to the hotel, as it was now nearly noon.

Here they found a telephone message from Alice, stating where she had gone and why.

Old King Brady was somewhat disturbed over it.

"I wish she had not gone on any errand for that fellow," he said. "However, I suppose it is all right. You get around to the Palmer House, Harry, and see what Mouser's condition really is. I will wait here for that boy in case he comes in."

Harry departed.

A little later and he called up on the telephone.

"Why, Governor, the man seems to have suddenly recovered his health and departed," he said. "He went away in a cab, bag and baggage, and left no word behind him. It looks very suspicious to me. I am afraid Alice has fallen into some trap."

This was enough to stir Old King Brady up.

"What about the cab? What was the number?" he called.

"The hotel people do not know," replied Harry. "The cab came for Mouser. It was not one of the regulars attached to the hotel."

"Come back," said Old King Brady. "We must get busy at once. We are certainly up against a plot. My suspicions about that man are more than confirmed."

The old detective was to have still further confirmation and that within a few minutes.

For he had scarcely hung up the receiver when Will Wilson was announced.

He was at once summoned to the room and Old King Brady asked him how he made out.

"Why, boss, it's a strange thing," said Will. "I followed that fellow to Jackson Park, and who should he meet there but my aunt. They sat there together for a long time, talking. Then he went one way and she another. I didn't know which to shadow. I couldn't shadow both. You see that put me in a hole."

"Well," said Old King Brady, "and that is the way it goes sometimes. What did you do?"

"I had to think quick, boss."

"Yes, yes, I know! What did you do?"

"I decided to follow my aunt, for I thought you would want to see her, anyway, and I felt sure she did not mean to go home again when I saw her go toward the south end of the park."

"Very well."

"Did I do right?"

"Yes. You gave the matter thought and acted for what you considered the best. I am satisfied. What was the last you saw of the man?"

"He was heading in the direction of the elevated railroad, boss. I think he meant to go back downtown."

"And your aunt?"

"She went to the Dowler Museum. Last I saw of her she went in by a door where it says, 'Ring the bell for the custodian.' I waited quite a while but she did not come out again, so I thought I might as well come here and report."

"We are up against it," thought Old King Brady.

He pressed Will for further details of his shadowing and got them.

"Look here," he then said. "I find that your father lived for a number of years in Bishop's Alley, off Halstead street, over a stable. What do you know about that?"

"I never knew where he lived, as I told you, boss."

"Did you never feel any curiosity to find out?"

"No. I hardly knew my father. He used to come and see us once in awhile, of a Sunday, but he hardly ever spoke to me. To tell the truth I didn't feel acquainted with my father, boss."

"And with him lived a boy about your age who passed as his son and was also known as Will Wilson. What do you know about him?"

Old King Brady watched the boy's face closely as he denied ever having even heard of the other Will.

His surprise and his ignorance seemed so genuine that the old detective could not doubt that he was telling the truth.

And all this only served to increase the mystery.

Certainly this seemed to be a very hard case to solve.

Just then Harry came in.

Old King Brady took him aside and told him of the boy's discoveries.

"Strange as it may seem," he said, "there is no doubt that the Secret Service Bureau has been deceived in some way. Mouser is no detective. The whole affair is shrouded in mystery. But for your discoveries about this other boy I should be inclined to imagine that the whole thing might be a plot against us."

"Perhaps there really is a case at the bottom of it all and a plot against us, too," said Harry. "At all events there seems to be no doubt that Mouser was shamming. I can read his sudden disappearance in no other way. But there is one thing sure, Governor. Alice has made a blunder in going to that museum. One of us ought to follow her up right away."

"We will both go," said Old King Brady. "Meanwhile I think I will tell this boy the whole business and set him to looking for the head."

"Would you tell him all? It may only raise his hopes for nothing."

"They are already raised. If you expect to get good work out of a boy as intelligent as this fellow is, you have got to be frank with him. At least that is my experience. Yes. I think I shall tell him all."

And Old King Brady did so.

Needless to say Will listened to the story of the missing heir with intense interest.

But instead of raising his hopes it worked the other way.

"I don't think I'm the heir. It's the other boy, the one he waited on like a servant," Will declared. "I don't believe my father was ever a real servant, either. Where would he learn woodcarving if he had been that?"

"Well put," said Old King Brady, "and I agree with you, my boy. If there is any missing heir and this story isn't all a lie the chances are in favor of the other boy."

"Then about my aunt," continued Will. "She never did any work. Somebody has been supporting her for years. I know she used to get money from somewhere. I don't believe my father gave it to her or I would have caught him at it some time. Maybe she is the nurse who stole this baby."

"You can imagine anything," said Old King Brady, "but there is one thing certain. That head was hollow. It contained something your father intended we should see. We want the head. It is up to you to find it. Now get busy and see what you can do."

"If any of the boys took it I can easily find it," said Will. "But I can't believe the head was hollow. I turned it on the lathe myself."

"When was that?" demanded the old detective.

"Three or four weeks ago."

"Have you seen it since?"

"I saw my father carving the face out, yes, but I never examined the head particularly since I turned it."

"Get busy and see if you can find it," said Old King Brady. "You need not come back here till you have either succeeded or feel that you have failed."

And with that Will left.

"And now for the Dowler Museum," said Old King Brady. "But let us first see if they have a telephone out there."

Old King Brady examined the telephone book.

"Yes, they have one," he announced.

"Would you call them up?" demanded Harry.

"I don't know. What do you think?"

"It seems to me I wouldn't. If it is all right about Alice it can do no good. If it is wrong then it will give them the tip that we are coming, and——"

But while Harry's sentence was still incomplete the telephone bell rang.

"Answer, Harry," said the old detective.

"Why it is Alice—or at least—hush! Hello! Well? Yes, I am Harry. Go ahead."

There was a brief wait and then Harry called:

"Er—wait. Alice? The Governor wants to talk to you."

And in a whisper he added:

"Pretends to be Alice. I am not satisfied, although the voice certainly sounds like hers. Says she has found the boy. Wants us to come to the Dowler Museum and consult with her."

Old King Brady hurried to the telephone.

It was a woman's voice which answered and certainly its resemblance to Alice's voice was very strong.

"That you, Mr. Brady?" she called.

"Yes, Alice. What's the word?"

"As I have just explained to Harry, I am at the unfinished Dowler Museum out beyond Jackson Park. I was sent here by Mr. Mouser. Tried to get him on the telephone, but he seems to have left the Palmer House, although when I left him there he was a very sick man. I have found a boy here whom I believe to be his missing heir. He is known as Will Wilson. I am holding the fort here till I can have a talk with you. Seems to me one or both of you better come out here as soon as you can."

"Very well," replied Old King Brady. "Is it all right with you, Alice?"

"Why certainly, Mr. Brady. Why should it be otherwise?" came promptly over the wire.

Then Old King Brady applied the test.

"Oh, Alice!" he called. "What is the star?"

"What's that?" came the answer.

"What is the star?"

"I can't understand you, Mr. Brady. The wires must be crossed. Or perhaps you are too close to the telephone."

"What is the star?" repeated Old King Brady, stepping back a little.

And this time there came no answer.

"Alice!" called the old detective. "Oh, Alice!"

Still there was no answer, nor did several calls bring any further response.

Old King Brady hung up the receiver and looked at Harry.

"Fake!" cried Young King Brady. "I thought as much!"

"She certainly did not respond to the test question," replied the old detective gravely. "And yet she must have heard. The voice was wonderfully close, but do you know it had a suspicion of a man's falsetto voice about it?"

"Governor, you have hit it!" cried Harry. "That is the peculiarity about the voice. I was at a loss to give it a name."

"Why didn't you put the test question?"

"Because she asked for you just as I was about to do it, and I thought you might as well."

"Well, she fell down. It was not Alice, Harry. This is a plot to get us to that unfinished museum."

"And we must go?"

"Yes, but with a uniformed policeman upon whom they will not dare to play tricks."

And the Bradys lost no time in hurrying to the far South Side.

They went first to the nearest police station.

Here Old King Brady made himself known to the sergeant and explained as much as he cared to of the situation.

"Why," said the sergeant. "I can scarcely believe there is anything wrong there, Mr. Brady. I know Mr. Carstairs, the custodian, personally. He has been in charge of the building ever since work stopped and the lawsuits began. I will go there with you myself if you wish?"

"I shall be greatly obliged if you will," replied the old detective. "Of course we may have been fooled into thinking that our Miss Montgomery actually went to the Dowler Museum; but I can scarcely believe that such is the case."

He said nothing of the experiences of the boy shadower.

While guarding against falling into a possible trap himself, he wanted to take the people at the museum entirely by surprise.

So the police sergeant called a man to relieve him and they started for the museum.

The sergeant hurried up the steps, with the detectives at his heels, and rang the bell.

The summons was answered in a minute by a tall, elderly man, who looked as if he might be either English or Scotch.

"Oh, Sergeant McElroy!" he said. "Well, sergeant, what can I do for you?"

"Gentlemen, this is Mr. Carstairs," said the sergeant.

He stepped aside and left the case in Old King Brady's hands.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BOY SHADOWER GOES ON THE JOB AGAIN.

Will Wilson lost no time in getting back to Blue Island avenue.

The mystery of the case had scarcely affected him as it would another boy.

For Will was a quick thinker and a boy who rapidly formed conclusions.

He had formed them in this case.

It seemed to him perfectly plain.

He was his father's son. The other Will was the missing heir. Mrs. Ellen Kindley was Ellen Feeney, the nurse. It was she who had stolen the child. His father had decided to put the heir out of the way and had done so. Not by killing him—Will did not believe that the old woodcarver would do that—but by placing him where he could not be found.

And for all this Will could see but one reason.

His father proposed to put him forward in the place of the true heir.

"It never would have worked," Will said to himself. "It's a good job he died. We should have all landed in the penitentiary, surest thing."

Such were Will's conclusions. He could read the riddle in no other way.

But as to why his father had acted as he did toward the Bradys Will could form no theory, except that his singular conduct had been induced by fear.

Reaching the neighborhood of his home Will went straight to the rooms over a beer saloon, where his friend, Sauer Kraut, lived.

The boy was at school, where Will ought to have been and where he was likely to be made to go if caught by the truant officer on the street.

"Tell him I want to see him," Will said to the boy's mother. He gave his name and address, adding: "He knows me all right."

The woman promised to send Sauer Kraut around and Will went home and waited for school to be out.

He was a busy little fellow; one who never could endure an idle moment.

So he went to work at the lathe, turning out head blocks.

He was able to think better while at work.

And as he thought he remembered something which seemed worth while.

There was a certain box which always stood on the top shelf of the closet.

His father had been very particular about this box. He had given Will express orders never to touch it. It was a rough, wooden affair, and secured by a small brass padlock.

One night when Will came in late he found his father with the box open on the work bench.

The old man hastily shut down the lid and locked the box.

He seemed afraid that Will might see what was inside.

"I'm going to have a look at that box," thought Will.

He got a chair and, going into the closet, stood on it and took down the box.

Instantly he perceived that it had been tampered with.

One of the staples was secured, the padlock had been filed away and the lock itself was gone.

Will threw back the cover.

It was as he suspected.

The box was empty—at least he thought so at first—but as he looked again he saw a bit of tissue paper lying in one corner.

Securing this he felt something hard inside.

It was a baby's finger ring with a little blue stone set in it.

"My aunt went through this box, surest thing!" thought Will.

Again he was jumping at conclusions.

But very often the conclusions which this boy jumped at were correct.

Will put the ring into his pocket and restored the box to its place.

And, of course, he did a lot of thinking about the ring and wondered if it could have once belonged to the stolen child.

• Soon afterward it was three o'clock, and at twenty minutes past three Sauer Kraut came in.

"Me mudder said you wanted to see me," he said. "Whatcher want?"

"Say, Sauer Kraut," said Will, "last night, when my father died, you were in the lot up by Bellis street, you know?"

"Yair."

"Did you see a wooden head nailed against the fence? One like those?"

Will pointed to a row of sample heads on a shelf above the work bench.

"Yair. I seen it. What about dat?" replied Sauer Krant.

"Who took it away off the fence—do you know?"

"I dunno who tuk it away, but I expect it was Jim Snitzer. Annyhow it's standin' on de shelf behind he bar now."

"You mean Snitzer, whose father keeps the saloon downstairs, under where you live?"

"Yair."

"The head is mine and I want it."

"Don't believe you will get it off old Snitzer den. He's loaded up to de eyes all de time. Gee, isn't he savage? He'll be settin' his bloodhounds onto you if you try to get dat head."

"I don't suppose he cares for it," said Will.

"He does. I heard him say it was great only dis mornin'. He was showing it to de driver of de lager beer wagon."

"All right. I won't bother about it then," said Will quietly.

"I don't see what you want it for, annyhow," persisted Sauer Kraut. "You've got a dozen heads just like it here."

"It's part of an order my father was making up," said Will. "I've got to give it to the man who bought it—see? But don't say anything about it to Snitzer, Sauer Kraut. I'll cut it out."

He gave the boy a quarter "for his trouble," as he put it, and let him go.

But just the same Will determined to have that head.

Sauer Kraut was no sooner well out of the way than Will took down another head, which was the very duplicate of the missing block, and, wrapping it in a newspaper, went to Snitzer's saloon.

Sure enough there was the head.

But instead of being behind the bar it stood on a little shelf near its end.

Snitzer or someone else had bored a hole in the corner of the mouth and a clay pipe was stuck in it. The same old hat was on top of the head.

There were two men playing dominoes at one of the tables, but no one was drinking at the bar, behind which Snitzer himself stood, reading a paper.

Will had seen the man before, but he had no acquaintance with him.

He had no idea that the saloonkeeper even knew who he was.

"Mr. Snitzer," he said boldly, "you don't know me, but I'm the son of the man who carved that head your boy found in the lot up by Bellis street last night."

"Huh!" growled the saloonkeeper, looking up from his paper.

"My father wants that head. It belongs to a man downtown," continued Will. "Someone must have swiped it from him and nailed it there on the fence where your boy found it. You will let me have it, I s'pose?"

"Ah-h-h, you ged owit!" growled the man of beer.

"Then you won't give it to me?" persisted Will.

Snitzer caught up a beer glass from under the bar.

"Ged owit or I trow dis at your head!" he snarled.

"Don't!" said Will. "You might break the glass. See, Mr. Snitzer, my father sent you this head. It is just as good as the other. You take it and give me that."

Another would have consented, of course.

But Snitzer was a particularly stupid, disobliging person.

He was moreover half full of his own beer all the time, just as Sauer Kraut had said.

He could only see some game in Will's offer.

"Ged owit! Ged owit!" he cried.

"Just look at this head. It is even better than yours," said Will, placing it on the bar.

The domino players now butted in.

"Why don't you be obliging, Snitz, and do what the boy asks?" said one.

The answer was in German.

Will did not understand the words, but he did the tone.

He saw that Snitzer had no idea of being obliging, so he determined to help himself.

He had been edging up to the shelf at the end of the bar all the time.

Now suddenly he grabbed the head and made a dash for the door.

Snitzer let out one roar and let fly the glass.

Will ducked and the glass flew over him.

It struck the glass in the half of the door which was closed, shivering it.

Out through the open side of the door Will darted and ran for his life.

He had captured the head, but the question was could he keep it.

He expected to be chased, he expected to have the bloodhound, which he knew Snitzer kept, set on him.

Neither of these things came about.

Perhaps the domino players stopped Snitzer.

At all events Will, looking back, could see neither man nor dog and he steered straight for home, never slackening speed until he was behind the locked door.

Then he put the head on the work bench and looked it over while he got his breath.

Certainly it looked just like all the rest of the heads.

Will turned it upside down and then made his discovery.

There had been a piece turned out of the head and a wooden plug was set in.

Evidently there had been a small nail driven into the plug.

It was gone now, however, and Will drove in another, after which he was easily able to pull out the plug.

It was as Old King Brady had suspected.

The hole went through almost to the top of the head, and in the opening was a scrap of paper.

Will pulled it out, and upon it, in his father's hand, was written the following:

"For further information call at No. — Blue Island avenue, top floor, to-morrow night, quarter to twelve. Knock three times on the rear door."

"He will never keep that appointment," sighed Will.

"What can it all mean?"

For with this discovery it seemed to be just as it had been with every other one in the case.

Instead of making matters plainer, the paper only brought disappointment.

But Old King Brady must be informed, so Will promptly got down to the Sherman House.

Neither of the Bradys were in.

Will waited until nine o'clock that evening, but still they did not come.

By this time he was so tired and sleepy that he could scarcely hold his head up, so he enclosed the paper in an

envelope with a brief note, stating how he had come by it, and went home.

During this long wait Will did a lot more hard thinking.

Why had his father put off the interview with Old King Brady until the next night?

For the address on the paper had been the old model maker's own.

It was this which puzzled Will.

There must have been some reason for it, he argued.

Was it possible that Mr. Wilson expected another person to call as well as Old King Brady—someone who could not or would not come until the next night?

The idea got such a firm hold on Will that he determined not to go to bed, but to remain on the alert till after midnight.

But after sitting around for an hour the desire to sleep was too much for the boy.

He flung himself down upon the old lounge in the workshop, which was in the back room mentioned in the paper, and was dead to the world in an instant.

The next thing the boy shadower knew someone was knocking loudly on the door.

Will sat up and listened.

It took him a minute to gather his wits together and realize where he was.

The knocking continued.

Will had left the lamp burning low.

He turned it up and, going to the door, called through the keyhole:

"Who is there?"

"Bridgemore," was the answer. "I am here according to promise. Open the door."

"I was right," thought Will. "Old King Brady was not the only man expected here to-night."

He looked at the clock.

The hands were exactly at twelve.

Will clapped on his hat and, pulling it low over his eyes so that his face could not be seen, distinctly, he again turned down the lamp and opened the door.

He felt that perhaps this might prove to be another case calling for shadowing, and he was right.

For there stood the peculiar-looking man whom he had shadowed to Jackson Park.

"I want Mr. Wilson," he said, eyeing Will with some surprise. "My name is Bridgemore. Let him know that I am here."

What could it mean?

"Didn't Aunt Nell tell him that father was dead?" Will asked himself.

Then suddenly it flashed upon him that his aunt did not know, for she had left before Will himself knew how the case stood.

"Mr. Wilson is not here," replied the boy.

"How? Not here?" said the man, speaking with a strong English accent. "I had an appointment with him at twelve o'clock to-night. I understood that he was so much of an invalid that he could scarcely leave his bed."

"He is not here," repeated Will, "and he will not be here to-night."

"Who are you? His son?"

"No," replied Will on the spur of the moment, hardly

knowing why he said it. "I'm just looking out for the place."

"But where is Mr. Wilson?"

"I don't know."

"Well," said the man, angrily. "You tell him that Mr. Bridgemore called according to agreement. Tell him I'll give him one more chance and that will be the last."

Whereupon Mr. Bridgemore turned, hurried off downstairs.

Will blew out the light and softly locked the door.

Here was another case of shadowing on his hands.

Will was on the job once more.

And this time it was easier.

The man had evidently come by the cars and he returned the same way.

And the boy shadower managed his points so well that he was neither seen nor suspected.

The shadowing was a long one.

It covered the same ground gone over in the morning. But this time it took Will beyond Jackson Park.

In short, it ended at the old Dowler Museum.

Will saw the man with the spats ascend the steps where the sign read:

"Ring the bell for the Custodian."

But the man with the spats did not ring the bell.

On the contrary he opened the door with a latch-key and disappeared inside.

CHAPTER X.

SUB-CELLAR DISCOVERIES.

Old King Brady was prepared with his line of talk when he found himself facing Mr. Carstairs, custodian of the Dowler Museum.

He promptly inquired for Mrs. Burns, but he did not mention his name.

"There is no such person here," replied Mr. Carstairs, looking hard at the old detective.

There was no doubt that he recognized him.

Old King Brady could read it in the man's face.

Thus to attempt to hide his identity seemed useless.

"You know who I am, Mr. Carstairs?" he said.

"Old King Brady, the detective, I take you to be," was the reply.

"Yes. Do you know a Detective Mouser?"

"No; never heard of him."

"Nor of Mrs. Burns?"

"Never."

"A lady called here this morning; a Miss Montgomery. You saw her?"

"No lady called here. I don't know who you mean."

"Another woman called here this morning," continued Old King Brady steadily, "a Mrs. Kindley."

"Don't know any such person. I never even heard the name. I tell you no woman called here. No woman ever does. I live here all alone."

"Ha!" said Old King Brady. "Such is your claim. But it doesn't satisfy me, my friend. Sergeant, we shall have to make a search here."

"Carstairs," said the sergeant, "there seems to be

something wrong somewhere. Mr. Brady isn't the man to make mistakes."

"But——"

"I advise you to make no objection, Mr. Carstairs."

"Oh, all right, Mr. McElroy. Anything you say goes, of course. Old King Brady is welcome to search here as much as he will, but I think I have a right to know what all this is about."

"Who called us up from here on the telephone about an hour ago?" demanded the old detective sternly. "That person seemed to know what it was all about."

"I'm sure I didn't then, and there is nobody else here, I tell you!" flashed the custodian. "I haven't used the telephone to-day."

His manner appeared to be honest.

More and more mysterious the case seemed to grow.

Certainly it was proving a very hard case to solve.

"We must make the search, sergeant," said Old King Brady.

"You hear, Carstairs?" added Sergeant McElroy.

"Oh, all right!" replied the man. "Just stand here till I tie up my dog. He don't like strangers. There may be trouble."

"No," said Old King Brady. "You stick by us, my friend. Don't try to pull away now. We must all hang together until we have seen this thing through."

Carstairs said nothing, but it was evident that the plan did not suit him.

He admitted his visitors, however, and conducted them all over the wing.

There were but two rooms furnished, those in which the man lived, as he claimed, and their appearance bore him out.

As for the rest of the big building the detectives did what they could, but it was a hard case.

In the main building the floor had not been laid. All ladders and hoisting machinery had been removed by the contractor, Carstairs declared. Thus there was no means of reaching the upper floors.

The main cellar and that under the wing where Carstairs lived was thoroughly searched.

The cellar under the wing nearest the lake was choked with rubbish to that extent that it could not be entered from the main cellar, Carstairs declared.

The Bradys walked out over the beams a little way and looked down into it, seeing nothing to excite their suspicion.

Great quantities of brick had been piled in this cellar for some reason. It was impossible to make a thorough search.

In one of the smaller rooms of the occupied wing Carstairs showed them a huge Dane dog.

The animal was loose in the room and came rushing out at them, barking savagely, when the door was opened, but retreated at the command of its master.

The best part of an hour was spent in this search and in the end the Bradys found themselves no wiser than they had been before.

Sergeant McElroy now left them.

He seemed inclined to belittle the whole affair and openly intimated that he thought the detectives had blundered. But he was very civil about it and told them

to call upon him at any time if they needed further help. And thus it ended in two disappointed detectives walking away from the Dowler Museum in the direction of Jackson Park.

Harry turned and looked back.

"Governor, there is a woman heading this way who seems to be in a great hurry," he said. "Of course she probably has nothing to do with this business, but slow down and give her a chance to catch up with us. There might be something in it. I wouldn't look back if I was you."

In a few moments the woman overtook them.

She passed without even looking at them and hurried on in the direction of Jackson Park.

"Nothing doing," said Harry. "Only my fancy."

"Don't know," replied Old King Brady. "She answers very closely to Will Wilson's description of Mrs. Kindley. Ha! What is she about now?"

The woman had dropped a folded paper on the pavement.

Old King Brady pressed forward and picked it up.

Upon opening the paper he found the following written inside:

"Old King Brady—I am the Mrs. Burns you were looking for. You can see and talk with me in Jackson Park."

"Going to talk with her?" demanded Harry.

"Certainly. I was not satisfied with that search. Something may come of this."

So they trailed the woman into the park, where she sat down on a bench before she had gone far.

The Bradys quickly joined her.

"Well, ma'am, I read your note. Now what have you to say for yourself?" demanded the old detective.

"Read this," replied the woman, and she handed out a sealed envelope.

There was no mistaking Alice's handwriting.

"I am a prisoner in the cellar of the Dowler Museum. Carstairs, the custodian, captured me. Whether the woman who calls herself Mrs. Burns and who will hand you this is in with them or not I cannot tell. She professes to be most friendly. She has told me a lot. She claims that she dare not set me free—could not if she would. Feeling certain that you will follow me up I have written this and she has promised to watch out for you and deliver it. She has not seen this letter nor asked to see it. Whether she is in with the gang or not I am unable to say. Help me if you can. Look out for the big Dane dog.

ALICE."

Old King Brady passed the paper over to Harry, who read it in silence.

"Well, Mrs. Burns, and what have you to say for yourself?" he then quietly asked.

"Just this. If you want to help that lady out of her trouble you must act quick. She has fallen into bad hands."

"And what are you to Carstairs and his gang?"

"Don't ask me that. I am giving away nothing. All

I have to say is that I consider it a shame the way they have treated Miss Montgomery. I don't propose to stand quietly by and see harm come to her. That is why I offered to help."

"Who is at the bottom of this business?"

"Who? Why who should it be but that fake detective who lured her to the museum?"

"But his object?"

"Can't you see? Are you blind? The story he told you is true as far as he told it. He is working for the legal heir of the Earl of Strathwaite. The boy he spoke to you about lives. He is the true heir. These people will kill him if they find him, but they never will."

"And why, Mrs. Kindley?"

"What do you call me Mrs. Kindley for?" flashed the woman. "My name is Mrs. Rhoda Burns. I am a sister of Carstairs."

"Sure you are not a sister to the late James Wilson, model maker on Blue Island avenue?"

"I don't know what you are talking about, Mr. Brady. But listen. I can show you how to rescue Miss Montgomery. Better do it now. I shall probably have no other chance."

"And this boy—do you know where he is?"

"Yes, I know. But I can't tell you now, and I won't. Rescue your partner first. Then arrest my brother, who is a scoundrel. Once he is behind the bars I will swing this whole case into your hands, but until then I will not say another word."

"Lead on," said Old King Brady. "We shall see what you have to offer, but beware how you attempt to betray us, Mrs. Burns."

"I am not that kind," replied the woman coldly. "If you want to rescue your partner then follow me back to the museum. You will see me open a door. Give me time to get around in front, then enter and use the bunch of keys I shall leave in the lock. Follow up the passages and you will come to Miss Montgomery behind the third door. Of course you are armed and will know how to defend yourselves if you come up against trouble, but I don't think you will. I can do no more for you, Mr. Brady."

She arose and walked off with an air of defiance as much as to say:

"Arrest me if you dare!"

And they followed the woman back to the museum.

The entrance was on the side away from the park.

Instead of going towards the inhabited wing, Mrs. Burns led the way to the wing nearest the lake.

The Bradys had not made the rounds of the building on the outside. They therefore saw now for the first time a little door at the foot of three steps which opened into this cellar.

Mrs. Burns descended the steps, unlocked the door and hurried away.

"Well, there you are, Harry," said the old detective. "There doesn't seem to be anybody around. We may as well go ahead."

"Suppose I go in alone, Governor, and you stay here on the watch?"

"No; let us stick together. Come!"

They descended the steps and pushed open the door.

CHAPTER XI.

FACING A FEARFUL FATE.

Now they found themselves at the entrance to a passage made of loose bricks, piled up and arched overhead.

Old King Brady took the bunch of keys, locked the door behind him and flashing his electric light ahead, hurried forward.

Presently they came to another door which was readily opened.

The passage led on behind it for some fifteen feet further and then they came upon a flight of stone steps, leading down.

They hurried down the steps, coming into a great open space.

The floor and walls were of concrete. It appeared to be a sub-cellar, extending under the entire wing.

The electric light did not carry far enough to enable them to see the whole of it, but directly ahead on their right was another door, one of the several which opened out of this big underground enclosure.

"The third door," said Old King Brady. "Now to see what truth there is in this woman's claim. Do you hear anything, Harry?"

"Governor, I haven't heard a sound, except such as we have made ourselves."

Old King Brady fitted a key to the door and threw it back.

"Alice!" cried Harry.

For there she stood directly behind the door, the sole tenant of a small concrete enclosure in which there was a cot-bed and a chair.

"Well! And so you have come!" she cried. "I did not know what to believe! The woman appears to have been as good as her word!"

"Don't stop to talk!" broke in Old King Brady. "I am not feeling safe even yet. Come, Alice! Explanations later. Let us get out of here just as quick as we can."

"But wait, Mr. Brady. There is another prisoner. A man in the next room."

"Who?"

"I don't know. We have done some signalling by knocking on the wall to each other. If you have a key—"

"I have the whole bunch left behind by Mrs. Burns."

"Then open the door."

There were nearly twenty of these doors in a row.

They stood on top of a narrow walk which ran along this wall. There were others still the further side.

The main concrete floor of the enclosure was at least eight feet lower than this walk.

Old King Brady tackled the next door and readily opened it.

A man lay asleep upon a cot in one corner of the little room.

His head was bandaged, his eyes were blackened and his face terribly cut.

"Hello, friend!" cried Old King Brady. "Wake up, if you want to get out of this."

The man roused up on the instant.

"Who are you?" demanded Old King Brady.

"Who am I?" was the answer. "Why I am Marmaduke Mouser, Scotland Yard detective. You, of course, are Old King Brady. I believe I have an appointment with you."

Perhaps this man was Marmaduke Mouser, Scotland Yard detective.

But certain was it that he bore not the slightest resemblance to the man who had called upon the Bradys at the Sherman House, being a person of an entirely different build.

But Old King Brady was not disposed to waste time in talking.

"Follow me, my friend, if you want to get out of this," he said. "Be quick!"

Bang!

The words were scarcely spoken when a heavy clang of iron was heard behind them.

"Something fell!" gasped Alice. "Oh, I am afraid that Mrs. Burns has betrayed us after all. I wish I never had written that letter now."

"You are up against a desperate bad bunch, Mr. Brady," said the Scotland Yard man. "If you only knew as much as I do——"

But old King Brady had vanished.

Followed by Harry and Alice he hurried towards the steps.

They were no longer visible.

A heavy iron or steel panel had dropped down into the opening, cutting off their retreat.

"We are betrayed all right," said Harry.

He had scarcely spoken when a trap door was raised in the ceiling overhead.

Daylight came in upon them and they saw a man looking down.

It was Carstairs, the custodian. His face was ablaze with an expression of bitter hatred.

"Old King Brady, you are fairly trapped!" he cried. "So are both your partners. I did it. I alone. Know why?"

"Say your say," replied the old detective.

"Twice you have seen me. Neither time did you recognize me. It is not strange. I have greatly changed since the year, 1885, when you arrested me in San Francisco and were the means of sending me to San Quentin."

"Ha!" exclaimed the old detective. "I know you now, Hiram Baluster! You murdered your partner, Winfield Bass, and burned up his body in sections. You have indeed greatly changed."

"Yes, Brady, I am Hiram Baluster," spoke the voice. "I committed that murder because I hated Bass as I now hate you. Brady, you are doomed. So are your partners. And with you dies that fool English detective. I hate the whole breed. The place you are in was constructed for a permanent swimming tank in connection with this museum. It is water tight and the piping is all in. I have only to open the gate to let Lake Michigan in upon you and that at some time between now and midnight I propose to do. I should open the gate now, but I am moved to grant you a little time to prepare for death. Morning will find you all drowned down there."

Bang! The heavy iron trap door fell as these last words were uttered.

We pass over what was said during the next few min-

utes and hurry on to the explanations which came through the Scotland Yard man after Alice had explained how she had been captured by Carstairs or Baluster.

"And now, Mr. Mouser, let us understand this business," said Old King Brady. "I have explained our position. Do you explain yours? To begin with, how came you here?"

"Easily explained," replied the Englishman. "I am here by the order of Potter Sons & Barlow, attorneys. They represent the interests of the Bridgemore family. Their last client was the Earl of Strathwaite, who died about a year ago. This missing child is, if alive, William Bridgemore, with a string of titles as long as your arm, ending in the Earl of Strathwaite. He is heir to an estate running away up in the millions. Against him stands Ralph Bridgemore, his cousin, whom I believe to be at the bottom of this attack on me. All I can say in further explanation is that the man who deceived you was my valet. We did have letters from a woman named Burns who claimed to be Ellen Feeney, the nurse. The letters stated that she stole the boy and brought him to America. That she could be seen at the office of her brother, custodian of this building. The law firm promised me your help. I suppose they were the cause of your being sent here to Chicago, where I expected to meet you. Word was to come to me through the Secret Service Bureau when and where you could be seen. When I hit Chicago two days ago I came here with James Ratey, the valet, or rather my assistant, a man whom I engaged just before leaving London. No sooner had I come into the presence of this man Carstairs than he and Ratey turned on me. They beat me almost to death and I was imprisoned here. I never saw the Burns woman at all. That is all I know. But I can see now that this must be Ralph Bridgemore's work. He is a desperately bad man. If the boy lives and can be made way with then Bridgemore comes into the title and the estates. Wilson, senior, cannot have been Carlow. We have positive proof that the butler had nothing to do with the stealing of the child and also that he died years ago, but this Kindley woman I believe to be Mrs. Burns and also Ellen Feeney without a doubt. The yarn Ratey gave you about the stolen letters was false. I crossed the ocean on the direct offer of the woman to produce the child."

"Who can be none other than the boy old Wilson brought up over the stable," said Harry.

"It certainly looks so," replied the Scotland Yard man. "It is easily proved. The missing child had the Bridgemore mark on his body, as it is called; a peculiar red blotch on the left breast."

Now thus far Old King Brady had said nothing about the man with the spats, nor having used Will Wilson to shadow him.

But now as daylight seemed to dawn upon the mystery he told of this.

"Ralph Bridgemore!" cried Mouser. "You have described him accurately!"

The whole enclosure was examined, but there was no exit save by the steps which had been cut off by the steel partition.

Midnight came at last, but as yet nothing had happened, nor had a sound been heard from the outside.

Suddenly there came a great gasp, a gurgle and then the sound of rushing water.

"Gracious, Alice! It has come!" cried Harry.

Instantly two electric flashlights were thrown upon the great tank.

The water was flowing over the floor of the tank and pouring in at the rate of many gallons a second.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

The boy shadower had shadowed the man with the spats to the Dowler Museum.

He was in no way surprised when he saw this man let himself into the custodian's wing with a latchkey.

He was just turning away when a horrible cry arose within.

First it was a wild, despairing yell. This ran into a cry of horror. And mingled with the cry came the snarling of a dog, all of which reached Will's ears by the way of the window alongside the door, which was partially lowered at the top.

Then suddenly two shots were fired and all was still.

He climbed up on the stone projections under the window and flung up the sash, thrust his head through the opening and listened.

He could hear someone groaning, but the snarl of the dog had ceased.

Will struck a match and held it inside.

The room was a little office used by the custodian.

Curiosity was strong upon him and he determined to investigate further. So he got on the window sill and dropped down on the inside.

Striking another match he lighted a lantern, which he found hanging up, and stepped out into the broad hall.

There lay the man with the spats upon the marble pavement.

Near him lay a huge Dane dog—dead!

The situation was plain. The dog had sprung upon the man in the darkness and the man in the darkness had shot him dead, but not until he had been terribly torn.

Will bent down and spoke to the man, but got no answer.

Satisfied that he was actually dead, Will took away the revolver and started to explore further.

The boy wandered on through the broad corridors until he came to an open door.

Behind it was a small apartment, fitted up as a bedroom, and here a lamp turned low burned.

Here was a big grip which belonged to his aunt; here in a closet were many articles of clothing which he recognized as hers.

He began pulling open the drawers of a chiffonier which stood opposite the bed.

In the lower drawer he came upon a bunch of letters and a little bundle of baby clothes.

"I'll bet those were the things she stole from the box!" thought Will.

He slipped out into the corridor again, but with the letters in his pocket.

Waving his lantern Will saw that a rear door stood

open at the end of the corridor, and he hurried that way. The door led out into a yard.

Beyond was an open gate. Will went that way.

Looking out through the gate, he saw the whole long line of the unfinished building stretching out before him.

Away down near the end he perceived a light which seemed to come from a cellar window.

Will put the lantern down inside the gate and hurried that way.

Reaching the window he stooped down and peered through.

He now found himself looking into a small room where there were great pipes and odd-looking machinery. There was a huge valve connected with one of the pipes.

A tall man with gray whiskers stood with his hand upon this valve, and facing him was a woman.

It was Will's aunt.

It was Mrs. Kindley who first spoke.

"Jim, I thought I could sand for it, but I can't; spare their lives for the girl's sake."

"Shut up, you fool!"

The woman shuddered.

"Oh, husband, some dreadful punishment will come to us for this!" she moaned.

"Nonsense!" retorted the man. "If Bridgemore succeeds in making terms with your brother and getting the proofs of the boy's identity all you have to do is to make an affidavit that the child is dead and we get our money."

"Ah, but it was so different from what I had always intended!" groaned the woman. "I looked forward to seeing our boy, Earl of Strathwaite, an English lord."

"Next thing you will be whining about the real little Earl and wanting to restore him to his rights. The little Will you stole and brought up as your nephew. Ha! Ha! He little dreams who he is, the young brat!"

And the boy shadower heard it all!

"Great Scott! So I am the missing heir!" thought Will. "And that wretch is this woman's husband! She stole me from my cradle, eh? No wonder I hated her!"

"Come, Jim! Come, husband! Turn the valve and shut off the water!" the woman pleaded.

The answer was in the negative, coupled with a fierce imprecation. And scarce had it been given when a head and a hand were thrust through the open window and a voice cried: "Turn that valve or you die!"

* * * * *

Down in the big tank room the water was slowly rising.

For some time the detectives had been watching it in silence, for the case seemed hopeless—there was nothing to say.

It was Harry who broke silence at last.

"Have you any hope?" he asked, standing with his arm about Alice's waist. "Can you think of any way of escape?"

"None, my poor boy, do not deceive yourself," replied the old detective. "Still I cannot regret having come here in answer to a genuine appeal for help from Alice. I—er—what is that? Gracious! Is help really at hand?"

For a loud clang rang out through the big vault.

In stepped the man, Carstairs, carrying a lantern.

Beside him was the woman Kindley, alias Burns, really

Mrs. Baluster, wife of the convict custodian of the Dowler Museum.

And behind them walked the boy shadower, revolver in hand.

"The water is turned off, Mr. Brady!" he shouted. "Go for that fellow! He's the man who would have drowned you out!"

And needless to say it took the Bradys but few seconds to complete Will's good work!

As for the rest it is quickly told.

Baluster and wife were rounded up in the station.

The man with the spats, identified by the real Mouser, landed in a hospital, where next day he died. For Will had been wrong when he thought him dead.

As for Will, Mr. Mouser fixed him up in great shape.

For Will had the Bridgemore birth-mark.

He also had the baby ring which was on his finger when he was stolen from Strathwaite Castle. There were the baby clothes, too, and letters from the Feeney woman to her brother, James Wilson, or Feeney, as his real name proved to be, disclosing the plan to put her own son forward as the heir when the old Earl died.

But what old Wilson's idea was in sending for the Bradys and tell Will what he did could only be guessed at.

The chances are he weakened at the end and, being better at heart than his sister, undertook to see justice done.

Will went to England with Detective Mouser.

To-day he is a pupil at Eaton School, the acknowledged Earl of Strathwaite.

When he is of age he will come into his own.

Baluster went to Joliet for twenty years.

His wife got a five years' sentence, but she died of pneumonia before she was removed from the Cook County Jail.

As for the bogus Mouser his fate remained a mystery.

Certain it seemed that Ralph Bridgemore had paid him for betraying his master.

Probably the fellow was satisfied with what he got, and so disappeared.

As for the Bradys, this case, which proved so hard to solve and came so near costing them their lives, also proved profitable.

The London lawyers sent them a draft for a good fat fee after Mouser's return.

And yet so obscure was it all that work had scarcely begun when the end came to the case of The Bradys and the Boy Shadower.

THE END.

Read "THE BRADYS' CUNNING PLOT: or, TRAPPING THE RIVER PIRATES," which will be the next number (530) of "Secret Service."

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ITEMS WORTH READING.

Strenuous youths who pay their quarter for the hire of a bicycle boat on the lake in Prospect Park, Brooklyn, N. Y., find out that they have paid for the privilege of performing a piece of excessively hard work. A boat of this description is being used on the lake at St. Moritz, in Switzerland. There it is called the tretvelo, and it is said that high speed can be attained with it, which is very different from the snail's pace at which the Prospect Park boat can be made to go. An ordinary bicycle is fitted upon the frame of a catamaran, and the rear wheel acts as a sort of fly wheel, the power being transmitted by gearing from the sprocket wheel. The operator mounts in the saddle just as he would on a bicycle, puts his feet to the pedals and starts off just as he would on a regular wheel. The propeller, geared up, spins with great rapidity and the boat darts off, far faster than anything propelled by oars and hand power. It is possible to make fifteen miles an hour without undue effort with this new form of leg-driven boat.

Eight thousand and four feet of ice high is the Yoho glacier of Canada. Since the first discovery of this largest of Canada's glaciers it has maintained a grand archway of ice at its lower extremity. The span of this arch is no less than 250 feet, and its height is estimated at 70 feet, while from beneath the arch the drainage escapes. The formation of the arch seems to be an annual phenomenon. Toward the close of the summer it becomes weakened by melting, and the whole structure collapses. The ice gradually is broken up and finally removed, and the formation of a new archway is commenced. From the archway issues the Yoho River. It is calculated that an avalanche must have occurred in 1850 or 1860. Since then the retreat of the glacier has been at the average rate of five to six feet a year. From August, 1901, to August, 1904, it was found that the retreat had been 111 feet, or 37 feet a year. Between August, 1904, and August, 1905, the glacier receded but nine feet, and is now thought to be checked. About the nose of the glacier there is evidence of a bodily disruption of the rock strata, to which the term "plucking" is applied. Rock layers are ripped off where the layers are thin bedded and pointed, and the fragments are pressed into the ice to assist in further work. The Yoho glacier is an almost if not entirely isolated example of a glacier as a great engine of erosion. Other glaciers move forward and are engines of transportation.

Few animals have survived the attacks made by science upon their reputation as weather prophets. The green frog

is a conspicuous exception. He is, to be sure, a croaking prophet, but plenty of people still pin their faith to him. Even so scientific a journal as "Symon's Meteorological Magazine" has a kind word to say of this little animal. In many houses the frog is kept in a bottle half filled with water and provided with a ladder, and the little fellow is carefully watched as to his behavior in uncertain conditions of the atmosphere. A number of weather maxims are based upon his posture and activity. If he remains on one of the lowest steps of the ladder it is considered a sure sign that bad weather is coming. If he emerges from the water and rests upon the steps above it fine weather may be expected, and the higher he sits on the steps the finer the weather is sure to be. He is also supposed to give warning of bad weather by croaking loudly before a storm. The magazine says that there is really some reason to believe that the green tree frog is somewhat experienced as regards climatic conditions and acts accordingly. In fine weather he skips about among the branches of trees, when at liberty, catching flies. At the approach of winter he seeks the water and finds himself a bed in the mud until the following spring calls him out to resume his war on the flies. Now, the frog on the ladder without doubt watches the weather conditions keenly and rises to look out for flies when the circumstances seem favorable. On the other hand, when the weather is cold and damp he is reminded of winter and instinctively retires to bury his sorrows in the imaginary mud which he seeks at the bottom of his prison.

WITH THE FUNNY FELLOWS

Tess—Mad at him? Why, he wrote a lovely poem to her. Jess—Yes, but she never read it. When she saw the title of it she tore the whole thing up in a fit of anger. You see, he called it "Lines on Mabel's Face."

The proprietor of a tanyard was anxious to fix a suitable sign to his premises. Finally a happy thought struck him. He bored a hole through the door-post and stuck a calf's tail into it, with the tufted end outside. After a while he saw a solemn-faced man standing near the door looking at the sign. The tanner watched him a minute, and stepped out and addressed him. "Good-morning, sir!" he said. "Good-morning!" said the other, without taking his eyes off the sign. "Do you want to buy leather?" asked the tanner. "No." "Perhaps you've got some hides to sell?" "No." "Are you a farmer?" "No." "What are you, then?" "I am a philosopher. I've been standing here for nearly an hour, trying to find out how that calf got through that hole."

Mayor Speer, of Denver, was talking the other day about a pair of political tricksters. "They gave themselves away," he said. "Don't tricksters always give themselves away? It reminds me of the two men who wanted to sell their corpses for dissection. These two men, miserably clad, called on the dean of a medical college in New York. 'We are both on the verge of starvation, sir,' the spokesman said. 'We are well on in years, and it is clear that we haven't much longer to live. Would you care to purchase our bodies for your dissecting room?' The dean hesitated. 'It is an odd proposition,' he muttered. 'But it is occasionally done,' said the spokesman in an eager voice. 'Well,' said the dean, 'we might arrange it. What price do you ask?' 'Over in Philadelphia,' said the spokesman, 'they gave us \$40.'"

A RACE AGAINST DEATH.

By PAUL BRADDON.

We had grown up together, as it were, Mollie and I, our parents being near neighbors, and—which does not always follow, firm friends as well. They were poor, and I suspect that fact had much to do with their friendship, for opportunities were always turning up for helping one another.

Our parents being such good friends, it naturally resulted that Mollie and I followed their example. We went to school together, read together, and somehow when Mollie was eighteen and I twenty, we agreed to travel together all our lives, and were very happy in that arrangement. In fact, no other would have seemed right or natural, either to us or our parents.

From the earliest days of my boyhood I had a fondness for the water, haunting the palatial steamboats that floated on the great Mississippi river, on whose banks nestled the city in which we dwelt, and, at the period to which I am about to refer, I had just secured a position as pilot on a small freight steamer.

It was not much of a position, to be sure, nor was there much of a salary attached to it; but, small as it was, Mollie and I decided that we could make it answer for two people, neither of them extravagant or unreasonable.

So, early one bright morning, having obtained a day's leave of absence, Mollie and I were married, and stepping into a carriage I had hired for the occasion, we started off, having decided on a day's excursion to a celebrated cave near by, this being all the wedding trip we could allow ourselves; not that we cared in the least, however; we were too happy to be disturbed by any shortcomings of sum or purse.

We had scarcely driven beyond our own street, when we were brought to a halt. A messenger whom I recognized as belonging to our steamboat company hailed me.

"Here is a note for you from the superintendent."

Thus it ran:

"Am sorry to have to recall your leave for to-day, but you must immediately go on board the Mobilia, which is ready to start up the river. The pilot is too ill to attend to his duty, and you are appointed to take his place for the present."

"There goes our wedding-trip all to smash!" said I, as Mollie read the order.

"Why so?" she asked.

"You see I must go into the pilot-house of the Mobilia."

"Very well," she replied. "We will just go up the river instead of to the cave. Drive on, Bob; let us go down to the wharf in state."

"But you can't go in the pilot-house with me, little goose."

"Of course not; but I can sit on the deck outside," laughed Mollie, "and we can cast languishing glances at each other."

And so it came to pass that I took possession of the Mobilia's pilot-house, my heart glowing with love and pride; with love, for there, just below me, on the little forward deck, sat my sweet bride; with pride, because the Mobilia was one of the finest of the beautiful floating palaces of the Mississippi, and to pilot such a one had for years been the height of my ambition. I gave myself up to my own happy thoughts, and looking upon the far-distant, peaceful shores of the river, over whose placid bosom we were moving so swiftly, there arose from my heart a glad, silent hymn of rejoicing.

But suddenly a cry broke forth from the cabin behind me that effectually changed the current of my thoughts.

"Fire—fire—fire!" A horrible cry at all times, but most horrible of all when it rings forth in the midst of gay, unsuspecting hundreds floating in fancied security in the midst of the waters.

Ay! there was no mistake about it, nor false alarm. No one could tell how it had commenced, but there it was creeping

along the roof of the upper cabin, with the deadly flames greedily lapping up every scrap of awning and curtain they could find upon their way, ever and anon darting long tongues of flame down to the floor to clasp the light chairs, and tables, and settees in their fiery embrace.

The people darted from the blazing upper cabin to the forward deck below, where as yet the foe had made but little headway, and there our brave captain—who was that rara avis, "the right man in the right place"—succeeded in partially quelling the panic.

"Keep quiet," he ordered; "keep quiet and stay just where you are, or I will not answer for the lives of any of you! The steward will provide every one of you with life-preservers; but there is no reason for any person to go overboard—not yet awhile, at any rate, unless suicide is desired. Keep quiet, I say! Pilot, head her straight for the land, half a mile ahead." (We were at least twice that distance from the mainland on either shore.) "Engineer, put on all steam—crowd her on! We will run a race with the foul fiend who has boarded the Mobilia!"

Suddenly there was a murmur among the people below, and the next instant a light form flew up the ladder leading to the little deck by the pilot-house, but before I could say a word, my precious Mollie had thrown open the door, and closing it again, stood by my side.

"Mollie—Mollie!" I cried, "for Heaven's sake go back—go back! Don't you see how the flames are creeping toward us here? Go—go, my dearest, my own true wife! Don't unman me by making me fear for you! Go down where I can feel that you have a chance for safety."

"Rob Thorne," she exclaimed, her eyes looking bravely straight into mine, "am I your wife?"

"Surely—surely!" I uttered; "but go—go!"

"My post is here just as much as yours is," she answered, firmly. "I will stay here, Rob, and if you die, I will die, too. We will make our wedding trip together, my dear husband, even if it be into the next world. Keep to your duty and never mind me, Rob. There is hope for us yet, and if it comes to the worst, why"—and a brave, sweet smile crept around her lips—"we are still together, dear love!"

"Thorne," shouted the captain, "come down! Lower her and yourself over the rail. You cannot stay there any longer. We are very near the shore now, and the rest we'll take our chances for."

It was an awful temptation. I knew that did I follow the captain's advice both Mollie and I would be safe, for I was a good swimmer; and, should the boat not reach the shore, I could save her and myself; but then, if I did this, would I not deliberately expose every one of the three hundred souls on board to destruction? I looked at my dear wife inquiringly.

"Stick to your post, Rob!" she said.

"No, sir!" I shouted back. "I shall stick to my post; I shall stay here till I run her clear on the shore, or die first!"

"My brave Rob—my noble Rob!" murmured Mollie.

But, alas for my devoted Mollie—alas for me! Not the pilot-house only, but the entire deck around it, was now surrounded by flames. It was too late to lower ourselves to the deck below. The railing was all ablaze. My arms, released from the guardianship over the wheel, clasped Mollie close to my heart; but my eyes and brain were busy seeking some mode of escape from death that seemed each moment more certain.

All at once my eyes rested on the paddle-box. It had not taken fire yet; the flying spray had saved it. I had only to dash across the flame-swept deck, and fling open a little door in its side, which afforded ready access to the wheels, to lower my precious charge to the water beneath in safety. No sooner thought of than done.

"Take my hand, Mollie," I said, "and run with me. We shall

be saved after all. Wrap your shawl across your mouth." Leaping down on the deck, we sped, hand in hand, to the saddle-box. I dashed open the little door, and, pushing Mollie inside, passed in myself, and drew the door close again, shutting out the eager flames, whose angry roar pursued us as we dropped gently down into the shallow water, and crept out from beneath the wheel.

Our appearance was hailed with a shout of delight and relief, for all had given us up as lost, and we must have been but for the Heaven-inspired thought of the wheel-house.

Though some miles from any large city, we knew that the burning steamer must have been seen from the farm-houses scattered sparsely along the river bank, and that from these, notices of the disaster would be sent to the nearest town. And so it was. Before nightfall several small steamboats arrived, and after that but a few hours elapsed before we found ourselves safely at home, and our adventurous wedding trip at an end. But its results were not ended by any means. The terrible nervous strain I had endured, combined with the severe burns on my face and hands, threw me prostrate on a bed of sickness.

When I was able to report for duty again, two weeks later, I learned that a noble gift from the Mobilia's grateful passengers—no less a sum than \$5,000—lay in the bank awaiting my order. Not only this, but the steamboat company had voted me a gold medal and the appointment of pilot of the finest steamer on their line.

Years have gone by since my brave wife and I had so nearly journeyed out of the world on our wedding-trip. From pilot I have come to be captain and part owner of one of those beautiful floating palaces that used so to excite my envy; but never do I pass without a sickening shudder the little island where the Mobilia won the stakes in the last race—a race of fire against steam, of life against death.

THE RESCUE.

"What under the sun does that mean?"

These words came from the lips of a young man, who, in company with three comrades, abruptly drew rein, and cast keen, inquiring glances around them. Upon every hand stretched the broad, level prairie, guiltless of tree or irregularity as far as the human eye could reach.

For some moments the hunters glanced at each other. But then the eldest of the party, Jack Gavin, laughed shortly.

"Four fools in one outfit! Reckon we'd better sell out! In co'se thar's a step-off out yender."

They remembered now that the vast expanse of country between them and the Rocky Mountains was one series of gigantic plateaux, one raised above another, like the steps of a staircase.

"You fellers 'tend to the critters," muttered Gavin, as he dismounted. "I'll snake up an' see what's goin' on. Thar's Injuns down thar."

The old trapper glided forward for nearly a quarter of a mile, then crouched still lower and crawled on until he had gained the very edge of the plateau. It was as he had reckoned; there were Indians below. Gavin cautiously turned, and made several signals to his comrades. The quartette were soon lying along the escarpment, their heads well shielded with bunches of grass. And truly it was a curious sight that met their gaze.

Upon the level below there were full two-score savage warriors—Kiawas, as Jack Gavin declared. From these had emanated the suspicious sounds that arrested the travelers.

Barely visible in the distance were the still smouldering ruins of a wagon-train.

From this had the Kiawas drawn materials, and were dividing the spoils.

Lying close at the base, the hunters now distinguished two bodies—and one of them was unmistakably that of a woman.

"Dead, I guess!" ventured Harry Coon.

"No; I seed her lift her head a bit since. They're captives. I reckon they'd 'a' made money by bein' rubbed out at once, like the rest o' the outfit. Them Kiawas is born demons!"

"Can't we rescue them?" eagerly added Harry.

"Four ag'nst forty! We'd stand jist about as much show as we would tryin' to put out a weed prairie fire a-splittin' tobacco juice at it—no more."

"Reckon you can't see cl'ar to-day, Jack," quietly interposed Foxy Chase. "Look back o' them fellers a-squattin' down. Two bar'ls an' three kegs. If I don't miss my guess, thar's gwine to be a bustin' old drunk 'round hyar afore many hours."

"And then we will have a chance to steal off with the captives?"

At length the sunset and night descended.

The Kiawas side-hoppled their ponies and turned them loose to feed. They gathered a lot of brush and buffalo chips, and soon had a huge fire blazing. The head of one of the casks was knocked in, and the orgie began.

"We mustn't lose no time," muttered Gavin. "Them imps may take a notion to hev some fun wi' the captives when they git crazy drunk. Git your laryits—tie 'em together."

Firmly knotting the rawhide lassoes together, the trappers crept along until directly above the two captives.

Then the rope was made fast beneath Gavin's armpits, and he was lowered to the level below.

The captives were evidently alarmed, but the old man quickly reassured them.

"I'm a friend. We're going to git you out of this scrape, if you don't spile all by makin' a rumpus. Thar"—as he severed their bonds. "The gal fust. Don't be skeered, little one. Thar are strong arms an' true hearts up yonder; they won't let ye tumble."

With these words he secured the lasso beneath the woman's arms, and gave the signal to hoist away.

The ascent was made in safety, and the rope lowered for the man. Gavin finally ascended. The Kiawas were rapidly becoming drunk. Bending over the fast lowering liquor, they swallowed huge draughts, ceasing only when the fiery liquor took away their breath.

"Boys," abruptly said Gavin, "I don't keer 'bout walkin' when I kin ride. Thar's plenty o' critters down yender. Who will go wi' me fer a mount?"

"This beaver," grunted Zach Hines.

"Nough said. Lower us, you fellers. We'll git critters an' keep 'long the wall ontel we kin jine you. That way we won't lose no time."

Securing their weapons, the two men were lowered over the wall, and within ten minutes had picked out their ponies, severed their hopples, and quietly led them away, unsuspected by the drunken Kiawas.

Harry Coon rode beside the rescued maiden, and before daylight had learned her whole story. She, with her father, had been the only ones saved from the massacre. The train had been loaded with goods for the Chihuahua market, and in part owned by Hugh Davis, who intended setting up a store at Durango. This was the reason why Ella, his only child and sole living relative, accompanied him.

Just after sunrise the party were reunited, and feeling secure from pursuit, they halted for a couple of hours and breakfasted.

That night's ride decided the fate of Harry Coon. He fell over head and ears in love with Ella, and made such good use of his opportunities that, before the trading-post on the Arkansas was reached, the two had decided to become one; and, finding an itinerant preacher at the post, they were married.

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